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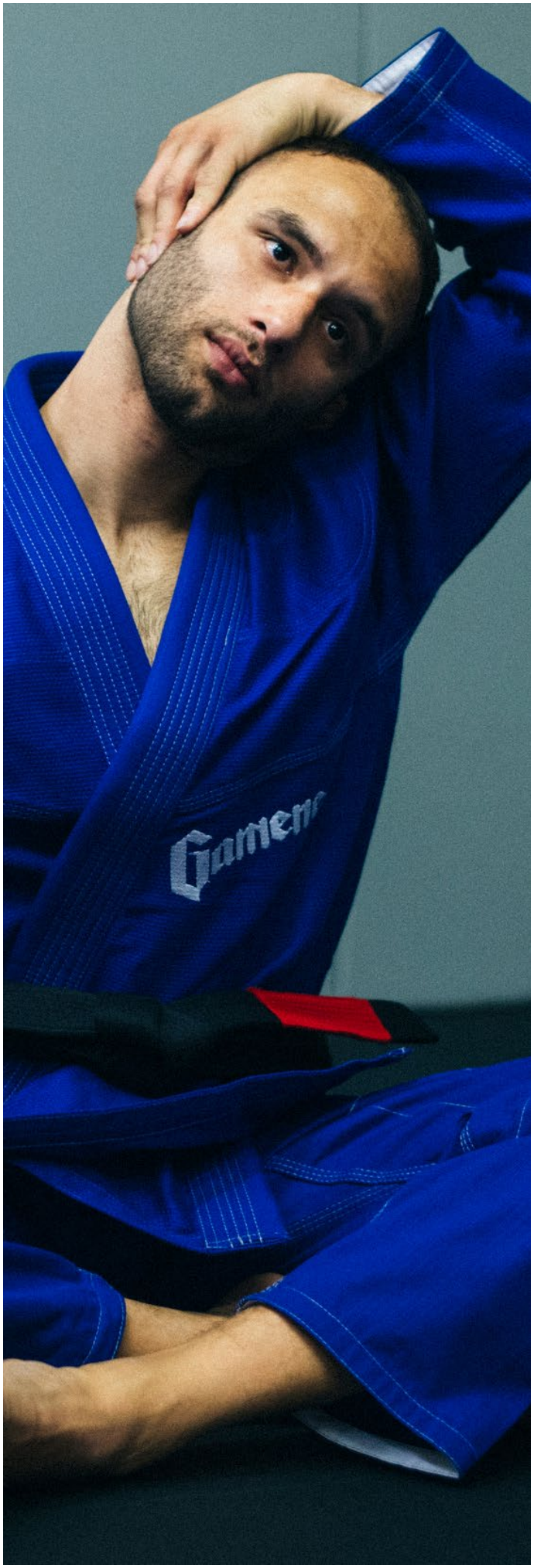

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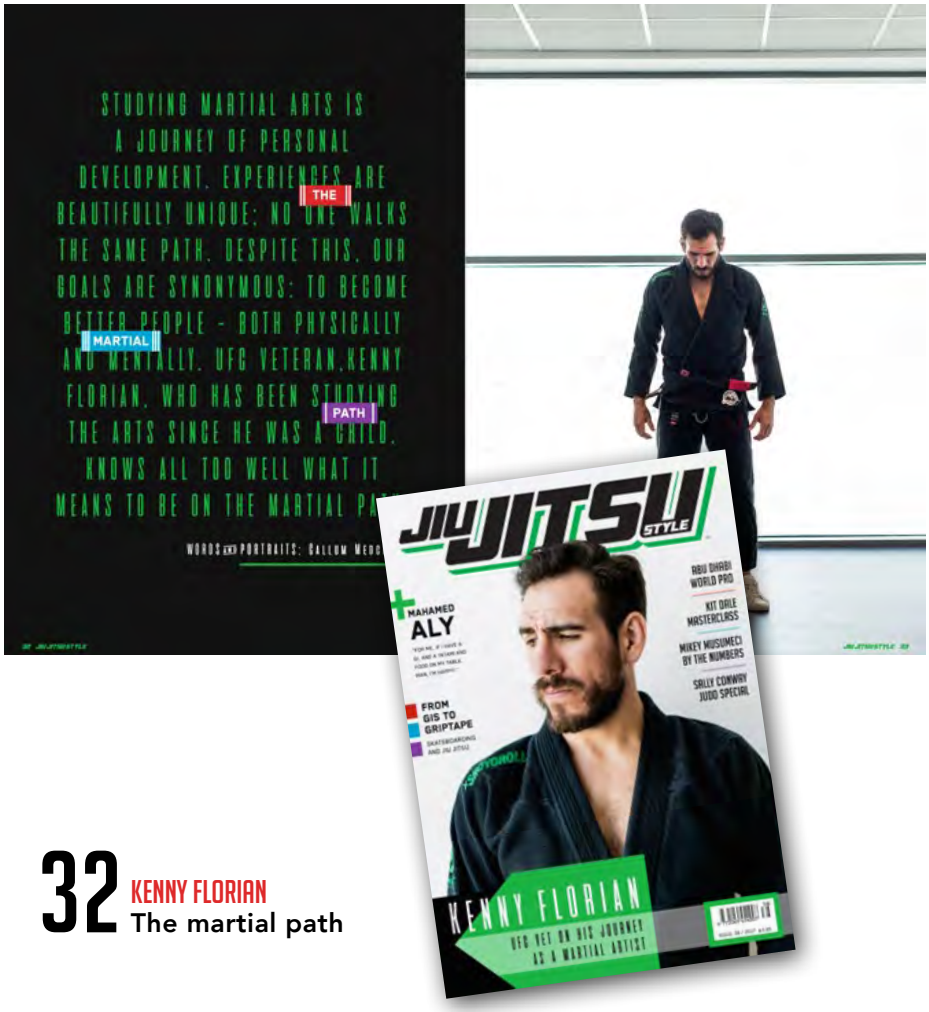
STUDYING MARTIAL ARTS IS A JOURNEY OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT. EXPERIENCES ARE BEAUTIFULLY UNIQUE; NO ONE WALKS THE SAME PATH. DESPITE THIS, OUR GOALS ARE SYNONYMOUS: TO BECOME BETTER PEOPLE - BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY. UFC VETERAN, KENNY FLORIAN, WHO HAS BEEN STUDYING THE ARTS SINCE HE WAS A CHILD, KNOWS ALL TOO WELL WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ON THE MARTIAL PA
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The martial path

JIU JITSU STYLE

SECOND FRONT

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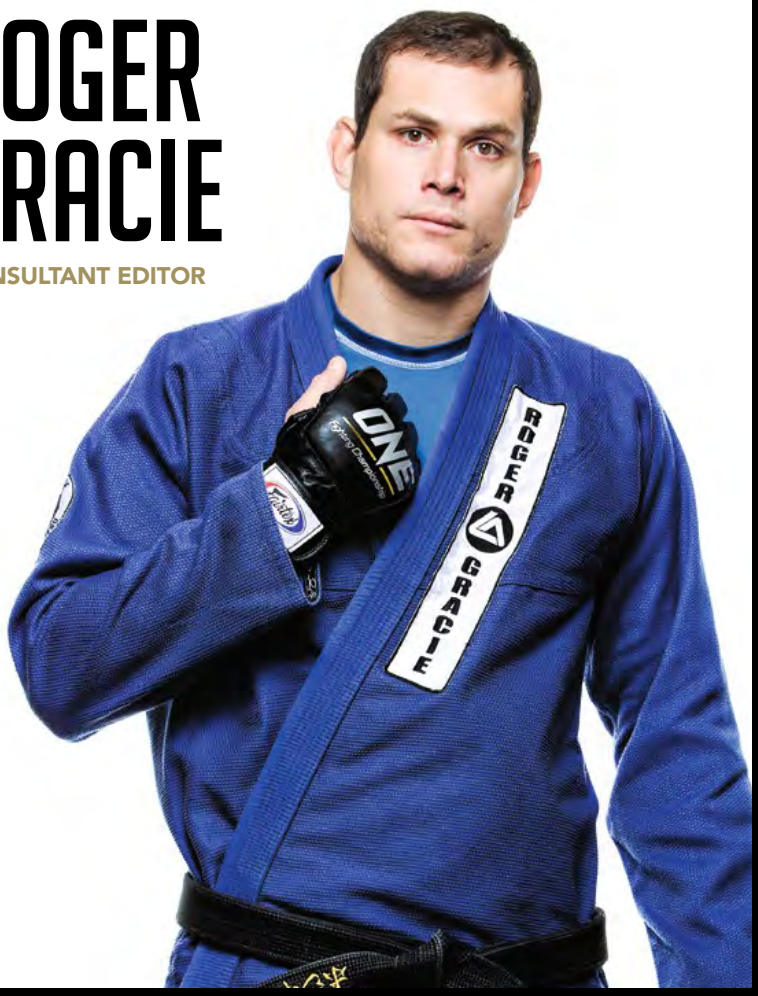
ROGER GRACIE

CONSULTANT EDITOR



"I HAVEN'T SHOWN TOO MUCH OF MY TECHNIQUE TO THE COMMUNITY, WITH THE IDEA THAT ONE DAY I'D HAVE MY OWN WEBSITE TO SHOWCASE ALL MY KNOWLEDGE"

It's been a busy time for me over the past few months. I've been training hard, as always; working on my boxing, staying ready for another MMA fight, while also training in the gi and preparing for the IBJJF Pro League this August.

I love developing new skills, with my boxing and also my love of chess keeping me busy away from the academy, but I always love it when I get to put on my gi and train jiu jitsu. I have a great network of people around me in London, so I've enjoyed keeping my training up and keeping fit for my next goals.

Another goal that I am very proud to have finally accomplished is launching my instructional website, *Roger Gracie TV*, which is now live. Historically, I haven't shown too much of my technique to the community, with the idea that one day I'd have my own website to showcase all my knowledge. It's been a very long project, but we have finally got there and I hope it will be something that people all over the world can enjoy. We are going to update the content regularly, so it's an ongoing project for me, and one that I find very fulfilling.

As always, we've worked hard to line-up some great content for this issue of the magazine, starting with our cover star, Kenny Florian. Kenny has had an amazing career in the UFC, and has set a very good example as a martial artist. His interview is full of interesting perspective – and lots of great stories – so do check this out.

We also have a feature interview with Mahamed Aly, who is one of the younger black belts really making a name for himself at the moment. Aly is a very exciting fighter to watch; explosive and dynamic, so be sure to watch his career progress over the coming years.

We have a range of technique for you, from Australian Kit Dale to British Judo Olympic medalist, Sally Conway. I am a big fan of judo, so it's always great to see techniques from elite judoka.

For people interested in learning about the Ketogenic diet, we have a very detailed article for you. It's a really interesting diet, which has gained lots of publicity recently, and this piece will help you gain all the facts, as well as reference how it can work for a jiu jitsu fighter.

Enjoy the latest issue of the magazine guys and – until next time – keep training and enjoying jiu jitsu.

ROGER GRACIE

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THE BIG PICTURE

Alliance fighter, Isaque Bahiense, prepares to take to the mat and fight in front of UAE royalty at the Abu Dhabi World Pro 2017.

PICTURE: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

CLASSIC MATCH

'THIRTY SECONDS TO GO, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? THERE'S NO STRATEGY NO MORE'
- XANDE RIBEIRO

XANDE RIBEIRO VS ROGER GRACIE

When it comes to the history of Brazilian jiu jitsu competition, Roger Gracie's domination in the first decade of the 21st century is unmatched. He began by winning the IBJJF Worlds in 2000 as a blue belt, then again as both a purple and brown belt in the following two years. His only slip was in 2003, as a new black belt, though even in his 'worst' year, Roger still came away with a silver medal in the Absolute.

From 2004, Roger had an incredible six-year run of gold medals in his weight division. He was still undefeated when his focus shifted to MMA after 2010. Yet at open weight, it proved difficult to get past that 2003 silver medal.

Both Roger and Xande had a legacy to live up to. For Roger, it was the storied Gracie family. For Xande, it was his brother Saulo. The elder Ribeiro sibling had amassed a stack of gold medals by 2006, in a variety of weight divisions. The brothers were very close, as Xande described in *Road to a Championship*:

Sometimes I'm more happy when he wins than when I win, and he feels the same. For sure he feels the same, he was like way more happy than I was [...] Jiu jitsu is individual, but you need that person who understands you. [...] Look how I'm blessed, this guy, he's the greatest, and he's my brother. There's nothing better than that.

Xande had just started hitting his stride by 2006, earning a couple of bronzes before his first black belt gold in 2004. In 2005 he came away with a silver, so he was eager to return to the top. Roger had bested him in 2005 in their weight division: Xande dropped to heavy in 2006, so only the Absolute final could provide him with revenge.

WORDS: CAN SÖNMEZ ILLUSTRATIONS: GARTISTA

MATCH LENGTH: 10 MINS
LOCATION: RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
VENUE: TIJUCA TENNIS CLUB
EVENT: WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

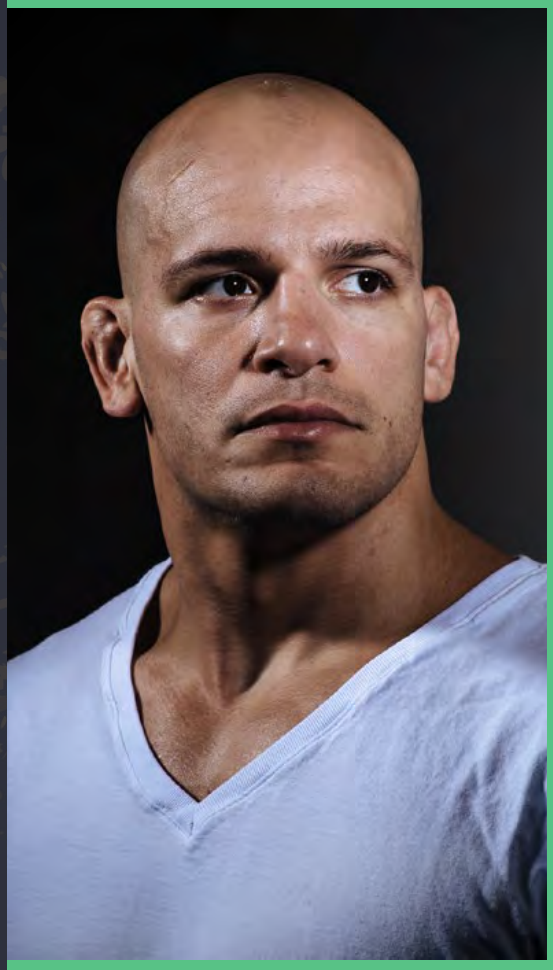
THE MATCH

Both men are confident in their judo, looking for the takedown. Roger is the first to score, landing two points as Xande hits the ground. Xande immediately swivels into open guard, successfully preventing the pass. After a minute, Xande is able to stand, whereupon Roger decides to pull guard.

Xande almost manages to pass, but Roger swiftly recovers to closed guard. Xande tries to open the guard, which Roger uses as an opportunity to attack an omoplata. He completes it as a sweep, ending in Xande's closed guard.

After Roger stands, Xande rolls backwards and grabs Roger's leg. Gracie capitalises to try and take Xande's back: once again, Xande is able to hold him off and eventually return to a standing position.

This time, climactically, it is Xande who lands the takedown, hitting a drop seoi nage with only a few seconds to go. The two men are even on points, but Xande is ahead by one advantage as times runs out.



"I WAS WINNING UP TO THE LAST TEN SECONDS AGAINST XANDE. TEN SECONDS TO GO, HE TRIED A TAKEDOWN AND I SAW THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET HIS BACK. I IGNORED THE TAKEDOWN AND I WENT FOR IT" - ROGER GRACIE

AFTERMATH

Reactions after the fight were typical of both men. Roger, known for his stoic reserve, said simply "I think, we can be sorry when we get home. Congratulations to those who are victorious today. One more year. Next year we will be here." He spoke at greater length later, in his voiceover for the *Tradition* documentary:

"My style of fighting, I'm never satisfied with points. I don't get a dominant position and hold. Winning or losing, if I'm getting a dominant position or not, I'm always improving. I'm never going to hold this position here just because it's going to give me the victory. There was one point I lost the fight because of that. I was winning up to the last ten seconds against Xande. Ten seconds to go, he tried a takedown and I saw the opportunity to get his back. I ignored the takedown and I went for it.

"When the fight is finished and you've lost, what can you do? Whatever mistake you did, it's too late now. If it was a mistake that the referee made or you made, or something happened in the fight, when the fight's finished, you know the other guy got the victory. Nobody likes to lose, it's not a good feeling. But it's something that, there's nothing to do, you've just got to think next time, I'll make sure that mistake doesn't happen again."

Xande, gregarious and brimming with confidence, also discussed the fight on his own documentary, *Road to a Championship*. Interestingly, he characterised his approach to competing in much the same way as his opponent:

"Thirty seconds to go, what am I going to do? There's no strategy no more. I didn't have any strategy, I was like, 'Man, I want to go for it, I want to be able to fight, I want to be able to do good, I want to do a show.' That's what I'm all about. I don't want to go there and win by one advantage."

Of course, Xande did in fact do exactly that, winning by a single advantage: he had four points and two advantages, compared to Roger's four points and one advantage. Regardless, he was the champion, visibly overwhelmed upon achieving his first Absolute title. Roger was patient: it would not be long before his time would come, with open weight golds in 2007, 2009 and 2010.

Yet Xande remained a potent obstacle. It was something Roger appreciated, displaying his characteristic humility in another comment from *Tradition:*

"Throughout my career, I fought great fighters, especially Xande and Jacare, probably the two guys that I fought the most. There was always a battle, never an easy fight. I'm glad they were that good, because it motivates me to train a lot more. For you to be great, you have to beat great fighters. You can't be great alone, you know? You want great fighters to fight against, otherwise you never prove yourself against a serious challenge. You need that challenge, so the greater the fighters out there, the better."

It is rare for a competitor to establish one memorable sports rivalry. It is a further mark of his greatness that Roger has at least two.

SOURCES: *TRADITION: RISE OF A GRACIE FIGHTER • ROAD TO A CHAMPIONSHIP • IBJJF.ORG • SLIDEYFOOT.COM*

POSITION STUDY

THE TRUCK CONTROL

THE TRUCK IS A GRAPPLING POSITION OFTEN USED IN THE SPORT OF JIU JITSU AS BOTH A TRANSITION TO A BACK CONTROL OR A CONTROL POSITION IN ITSELF, FROM WHICH ONE MAY SUBMIT AN OPPONENT. IN NOGI RULES THE TRUCK IS COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH EDDIE BRAVO AND THE 10TH PLANET SYSTEM, AS BRAVO AND HIS STUDENTS WERE THE FIRST KNOWN TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM AROUND THE POSITION AND SHOWCASE IT TO THE SUBMISSION GRAPPLING COMMUNITY.

Within the gi circuit, the truck is frequently associated with the Mendes brothers (Rafael and Guilherme) and their style, particularly in relation to the berimbolo and the crab ride position.

THE TRUCK IN WRESTLING

The truck control and many of its variations and entries date back to wrestling, a combat style that was using this position on a competitive platform many years prior to jiu jitsu. In wrestling, one of the more common entries for the truck is the famous leg ride, a position that is used to expose the back of the adversary, while being a strong hold to secure a pin.

Two of the more common uses for the leg ride control in wrestling are the wrestling guillotine (known in jiu jitsu as the twister) and the banana split positions. Both of these are intended to be pins, not submissions (though that line is often crossed while battling for control).

THE TRUCK IN JIU JITSU

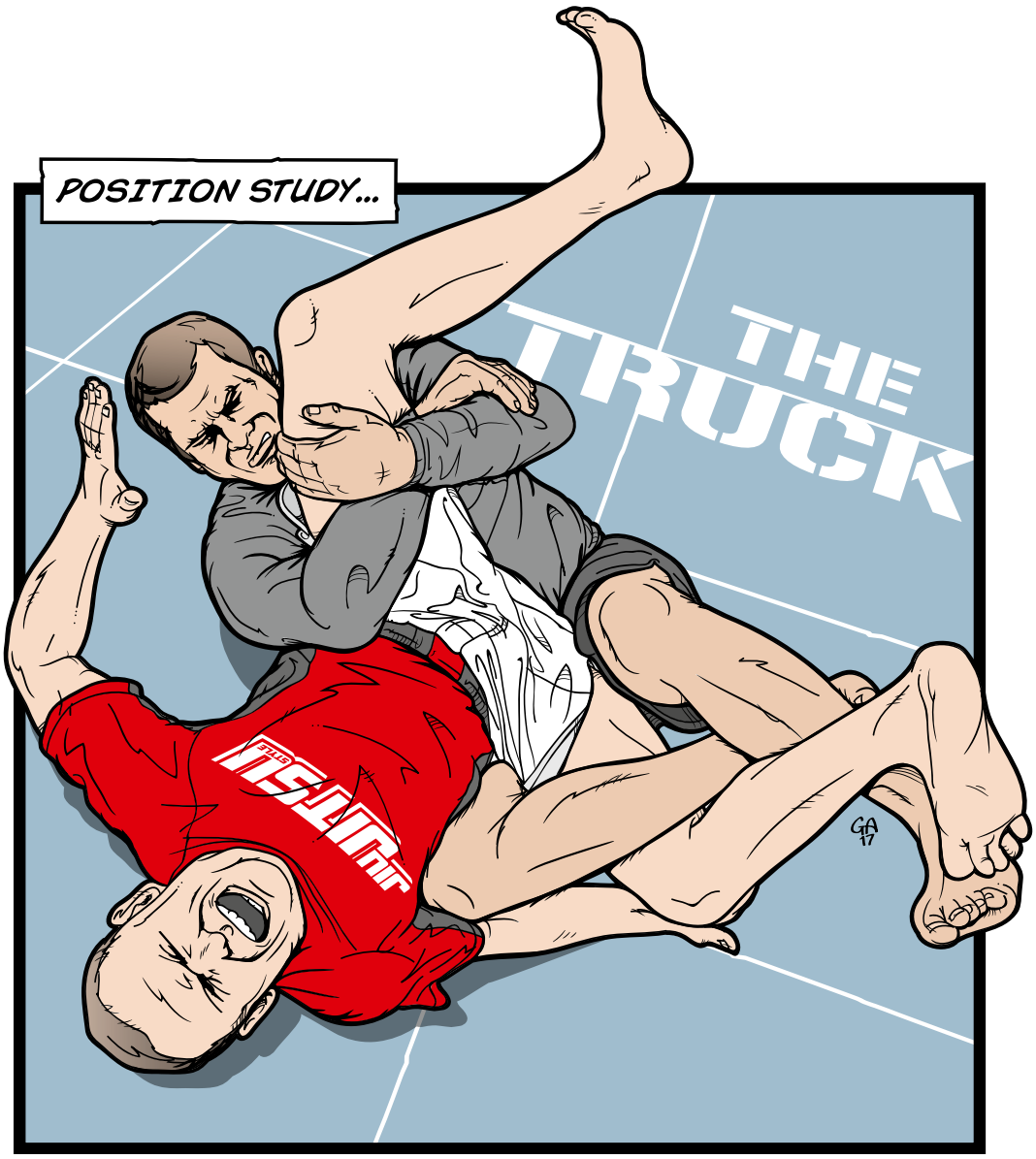
Eddie Bravo learned the wrestling leg ride/guillotine set up during high school. The now famous Jean Jacques Machado black belt started applying this position under jiu jitsu rules when he was a blue belt, perfecting the setup from side-control to achieve not a pin, but a tap – back when jiu jitsu's rule book was still unclear as to where it stood with regard to spinal locks.

Once the sport of jiu jitsu, particularly the International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation (IBJJF), started distancing itself from knee twisting locks and attacks to the vertebral column, Bravo went on to focus solely on the nogi circuit, where he continued developing his own ideas on a separate route from that of the sport's mainstream. Among those ideas was the truck position, which he enhanced and instilled in nogi culture as well as a few of his students – particularly Geo Martinez.

While Bravo carried on developing the truck for his grappling program, other athletes such as Ryan Hall, Leonardo Vieira, André Galvao and a few others started using a similar 'twister roll' in gi and nogi competitions around the early/mid 2000s; a position Ryan Hall labelled at the time as the "rolling back attack". As the name suggests, the use of this control leaned towards establishing back control and not the submission, and was achieved mainly from half and 1/4 guards.

Only a few years later, galvanized by the growth of the berimbolo, crab ride and the leg drag – set by Rafael and Guilherme Mendes during the late 2000s, the truck position started truly flourishing under BJJ's gi environment. The generation that followed the Mendes', and their style, carried on the truck's legacy as a set up for guard passes and back takes. Two of those who explored the potential of the truck control, not only from the crab ride but also from the leg drag, were the Miyao brothers.

With the truck prospering in both a points environment and under the submission only platform, we expect to see plenty of enhancements to this position in the forthcoming years.



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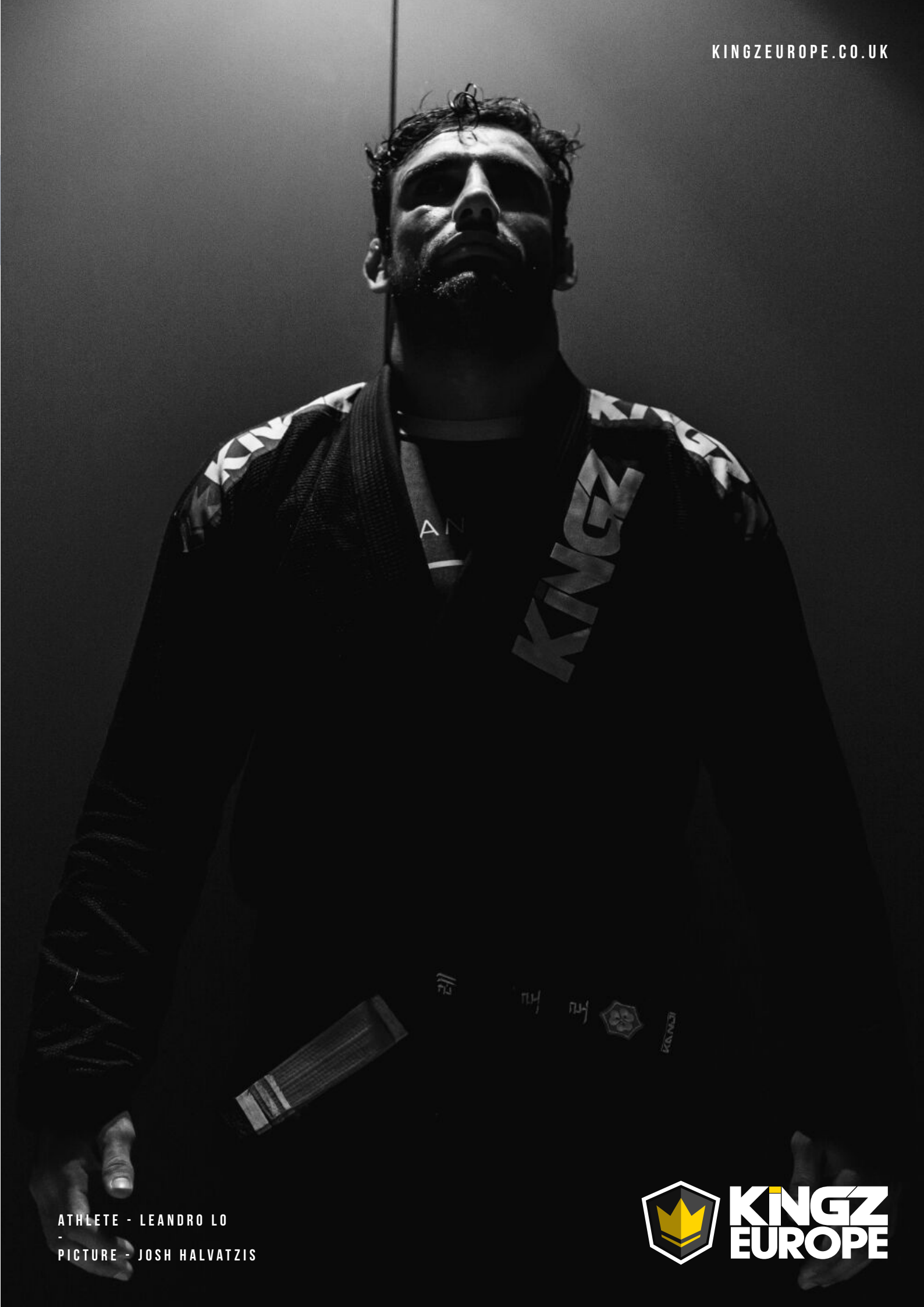
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BELT PROMOTIONS

IF YOU WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE AWARDED A NEW BELT RECENTLY, THIS PAGE REPRESENTS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SAVOUR THE MOMENT WITH RECOGNITION IN JIU JITSU STYLE! SEND IN DETAILS OF YOUR RECENT PROMOTION, INCLUDING THE RANK YOU ACHIEVED AND YOUR INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, AND WE WILL PUBLISH AS MANY AS WE CAN IN OUR MAGAZINE.

SEND YOUR EMAILS TO U2US@BJJSTYLE.COM

Both Daz Socha and Paul Harber were promoted to brown belt by Andre Ramos.

Brian Akins was promoted to purple belt by Shawn Hammonds at the Guardian Academy, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Sian Brobrowska and John Holdridge were promoted to blue belt by Paul Severn at a Jackson Sousa Seminar.

Aaron Kirk, Pete Sheppard, Arron Kotecha, Alex Willis and Merryn Western all received their blue belts under Balraj Mann and Marc Barton at Jiu Jitsu Brotherhood, Leicester.

Chris Sharp and Luke Ellis received their brown belts under Tony Bebbington.

Alan Burn was promoted to blue belt by Aaron Naisbet at The Dungeon BJJ.

Dan Strauss recently promoted Tom Van Weerdenburg and Mark Owen to blue belt at Bedlam BJJ Raspberry Ape Team.

Winthorpe Burke received his purple belt from Sam Joseph at Buckhead Jiu-Jitsu in Atlanta.

Phil Turner from Combat Base Liverpool was recently promoted to black belt by Darren and Helen Currie.

Eric Gedak receiving his purple belt and BJ Bolen receiving his blue belt from Clarence Nokahoot of White Bear Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

Matt Edgington promoted by Master Rigan Machado at Elite Jiu Jitsu Academy.

MY PERFECT DAY ON THE MAT

If I were to be asked what my perfect day looks like, it would obviously revolve around a good 90 minutes rolling about with mates at the academy.

This question got me thinking: how would my perfect jiu jitsu class take shape?

As with all good stories, it's important I set the scene for you.

I get out of bed at 7:30. I've never been one for sleeping in late, so by 7:45 I'm sitting in my living room with a pot of coffee on the go, journaling a few lines while trying to fend my puppy off my lap. After 30 minutes of reading (usually non-fiction) I take the dog for a walk, before returning home and getting stuck into a decent breakfast. I'll answer emails, write some stuff, make a few calls, before getting my gear together and heading to the academy.

Having recently moved out of London, it's an hour before I'm at the gym, but I actually find the trip quite enjoyable. I decided long ago never to answer my phone while in the car; instead I listen to podcasts, with some personal favourites including: *The Tim Ferriss Show, Love & Radio, The Infinite Monkey Cage* and (of course) *The Joe Rogan Experience*. By the time I arrive at Roger Gracie Academy HQ, I'm ready to build up a sweat and have some fun.

So, my perfect class; let's start with the warm-up. I've yet to meet anyone who actively enjoys the warm-up, but we all know how important it is, especially as we get older and the aches and pains tend to build up.

In an ideal world, I'd incorporate a combination of two approaches: yoga-style stretching, followed by flow rolling. Our technique guru, Nick Brooks, is not a man known for his warm-ups. His classes are quite often kick-started by shouting, "just flow roll to warm-up," and as long as I'm paired with someone who respects the notion of 'flow roll', I find this the perfect way to get the blood going.

"NAME ANOTHER COMBAT SPORT WHERE YOU CAN GET SMASHED IN TRAINING, WEAR A SMILE THE WHOLE TIME, BEFORE WALKING AWAY UNSCATHED AND IN COMPLETE AWE OF YOUR OPPONENT"

After 10/15 minutes of stretching and flow rolling it's time for the class to begin. Two positions are enough for me. I struggle big time with information overload, so focussing on one or two techniques per class is ample. Once the instructor has covered his positions and we've all drilled them for 30 minutes or so, it's time to get down to the nitty gritty.

I LOVE sparring; it's the reason I fell in love with jiu jitsu. In my perfect class, we would kick-start things with specific training, focussed around the technique we'd been shown earlier. Because jiu jitsu is my hobby I want every session to be fun – I don't find drilling fun. My coach, Roger, never drills but he's a huge advocate of specific training, so I would always include this as the preamble to full sparring, as opposed to drilling.

With a couple of short rounds of specific sparring in the bag, we'd move on to the main event – full training. My ideal: five rounds of six minutes, totalling 30 minutes. I find that the flow roll warm-up, paired with the specific sparring, leads perfectly into a half-hour tear-up. I'm lucky to train at a big academy, with plenty of bodies on the mat and a huge variance in ability. I love this famous quote from Frank Shamrock: "you need training partners you can play with, training partners who will give you a war and training partners who completely humble you."

Bearing this in mind, of my five full rounds of sparring I like to try start off with a relative beginner, progress to a couple of rounds with guys of the same level as me, then (ideally, if they're up for it) a couple of rounds with someone who will kick my ass. Which reminds me of another reason I love jiu jitsu: name another combat sport where you can get smashed in training, wear a smile the whole time, before walking away unscathed and in complete awe of your opponent.

I find the cool down is often neglected, but I'm aware we've pushed my 90-minute class to the limits here. If the time was up, I'd stay and stretch for a further ten minutes or so on my own. After all, we want to rinse and repeat the whole process again tomorrow!

Despite the London traffic, my drive home from the academy is probably when I feel the most at peace. Instead of listening to podcasts, I listen to music, completely content with my day no matter what happened during training. It's in these moments that I like to take stock; what an amazing gift I've stumbled upon. I can't imagine what sort of person I'd be without jiu jitsu in my life.

Thanks for tolerating my ramblings, and thanks for picking up our latest issue.

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IT'S SCIENCE

BY TYLER BISHOP

MIKEY MUSUMECI

HAVING WON WORLD TITLES FROM JUVENILE BLUE BELT RIGHT UP TO BROWN BELT, MIKEY MUSUMECI IS ONE OF THE USA'S TOP ATHLETES. MIKEY WAS PROMOTED TO BLACK BELT UNDER GILBERT 'DURINHO' BURNS, BUT NOW REPRESENTS CAIO TERRA TEAM. THE YOUNGSTER IS KNOWN FOR HIS GRASP OF THE 'MODERN GAME', WITH THE BERIMBOLO BEING HIS SPECIALITY.

THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF MUSUMECI'S MATCHES WAS 6:33

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THE SCIENCE OF JIU JITSU

'It's Science' is brought to you by BishopBjj.com. The goal of BishopBjj.com is to expand and empower the jiu jitsu community by emphasising the science and art of jiu jitsu in fun and exciting ways. We want to highlight what makes jiu jitsu so calculated, but also what makes it so much fun.

50%

OF MUSUMECI'S MATCHES SAW HIM SECURE THE BACK

INTERESTINGLY, MIKEY ONLY PASSED THE GUARD IN 17% OF THE MATCHES OBSERVED

54%

OF MUSUMECI'S MATCH WINS ENDED BY SUBMISSION

83%

OF MUSUMECI'S SUBMISSIONS WERE CHOKES FROM THE BACK

MIKEY SCORED FIRST IN 100% OF HIS MATCH WINS OBSERVED IN THE STUDY

92%

OF MUSUMECI'S MATCHES ENDED IN VICTORY

TOTAL MATCHES OBSERVED	12
TOTAL MINUTES OBSERVED	76
MATCHES WON BY SUBMISSION	06
MATCHES WON BY POINTS	05
OPPONENT WON MATCH	01
TOTAL MATCHES WON	11

ABSTRACT:

All matches observed of Mikey Musumeci used in this small sample occurred at major jiu jitsu events in the years 2015-2017. Only techniques, occurrences and outcomes that were recorded are displayed in the data below (i.e. if no butterfly sweeps occurred, there will not be a representation of that in the sample data charts). Matches were selected at random based on freely available matches.

THE BREAKDOWN

Mikey Musumeci is quietly becoming one of the most accomplished gi jiu jitsu competitors on the scene today. Not only is he one of America's top talents, he's often recognised as one of jiu jitsu's brightest minds. Known for his dynamic berimbolo and pliable physique, Musumeci has become one of the most consistent competitors of the modern era. In our study, we see just why he's become such a tough opponent for many to overcome.

THE STUDY

Mikey Musumeci was an ascending name in jiu jitsu long before he got his black belt. Known for having a complex and innovative guard game, Mikey was a multiple time world champion at the lower belts. However, as we've seen in the past, this does not always translate to black belt level competition. In Musumeci's case, his talent has transitioned almost seamlessly to black belt.

The first thing coming to mind when thinking of Mikey Musumeci is likely to be his guard game, for a very good reason. While you may notice that his sweep percentage is extremely low for a guard player – only recording a sweep in 1 of every 3 matches – his back-taking ability from the guard is the highest we've ever recorded. Musumeci was able to take his opponent's back from the guard in approximately 50% of matches.

This provides some deep insight into how Musumeci likes his matches to unfold. In the matches we watched, Musumeci very strategically chased his opponent's back from the guard, often passing up opportunities for points to do so. This strategy has proven to pay big dividends for Musumeci, who finished from his opponent's back 83% of the time when he was able to capture the position. Furthermore, he actually choked his opponent from the back in 45% of matches he won, and submitted his opponent in 50% of his total matches (54% of his wins).

This is such a dynamic and successful strategy for Musumeci and it explains why we rarely find him in positions to pass guard. In fact, in our study we only observed him passing the guard twice. That means he has one of the lowest pass percentages we've ever recorded in the study (17%).

The stats around Musumeci's success taking and finishing the back, and his lack of metrics in many other areas, very neatly summarise the approach Musumeci has applied to competition that has allowed him to rise quickly to the top of his weight division (regardless of the ruleset). He is incredibly hard to score against, recording a submission – or the first points – in 100% of his wins.

Mikey Musumeci's strategy is easy to draw out in a statistical format, but don't mistake the simplicity of his approach for a simplicity in his technique. Musumeci has a very articulate guard game with specific answers to every problem that his opponent presents him with. His technique is likely to be underrated as he can probably be considered in the upper echelon of top guard players.

Ultimately, Musumeci is an ascending talent. He is one of America's greatest talents and is still at the very beginning of his career. It's likely that we still haven't seen the best of what he has to offer.

SWEEPS (POSITION)

DE LA RIVA GUARD	2
SPIDER GUARD	1
50/50 GUARD	1

SWEEPS (TYPE)

SCISSOR STYLE	1
SIT-UP AND OVERTAKE OPPONENT	1
BERIMBOLO	2

PASS (POSITION)

HALF GUARD	1
STANDING	1

PASS (TYPE)

KNEE CUT	1
LEG DRAG	1

TAKING THE BACK

GUARD	6

SUBMISSION (POSITION)

BACK	5
DOUBLE GUARD	1

SUBMISSION (TYPE)

CHOKE FROM THE BACK	5
ANKLE LOCK	1

SUMMARY

SUCCESSES: DE LA RIVA, BACK TAKE

TOP TECHNIQUES: BERIMBOLO SWEEP & LEG DRAGS

HISTORY 101:
SANTANA ACADEMY

Among his various strengths, tolerance did not rank high for Helio Gracie. Although Waldemar Santana had previously been a star pupil and trusted with responsibility, the story of how he went from friend to rival is recounted in *Tradition*, recently released by Bantam Films. Joao Alberto, a student at the time, remembered that:

"*There was a problem at the Gracie Academy involving Waldemar Santana. Waldemar was our cleaner and took care of our uniforms. One day there was a shortage of water at the Gracie Academy and he left some taps open. The next day the academy was flooded. So Helio Gracie was infuriated and said some things to Waldemar that he didn't like. So Waldemar left the Gracie Academy.*

"*Helio Gracie...there were a lot of people who loved Helio and others who hated him. One of them [Haroldo Brito] started preparing Waldemar Santana so that he could challenge Helio Gracie. That's what happened.*"

This is not the only version of the story. In *With The Back On The Ground*, the reason given is completely different:

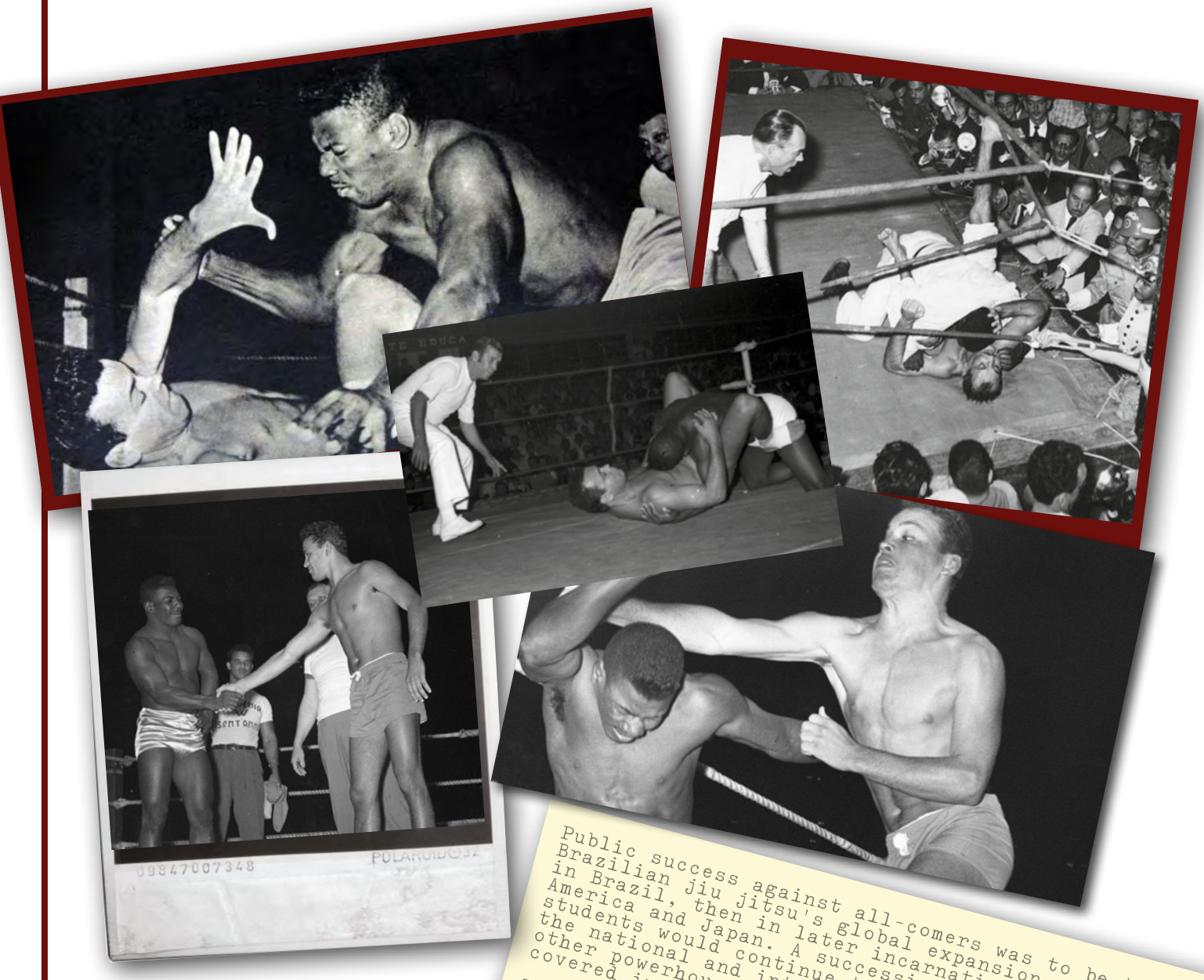
"*The day after Fadda issued his challenge to the Gracies, a fight that would have been exciting was announced. Waldemar Santana of Gracie Academy would take on Rene Bastos. He intended to prove that Helio Vigio had been wronged in fighting to a draw with Bastos, and Waldemar was going to right that wrong by beating Bastos. Helio [Gracie] was beside himself. He'd already forbidden Waldemar from accepting the fight if it were at the ill-reputed location, but Bastos's manager had talked Waldemar into signing the bout agreement.*

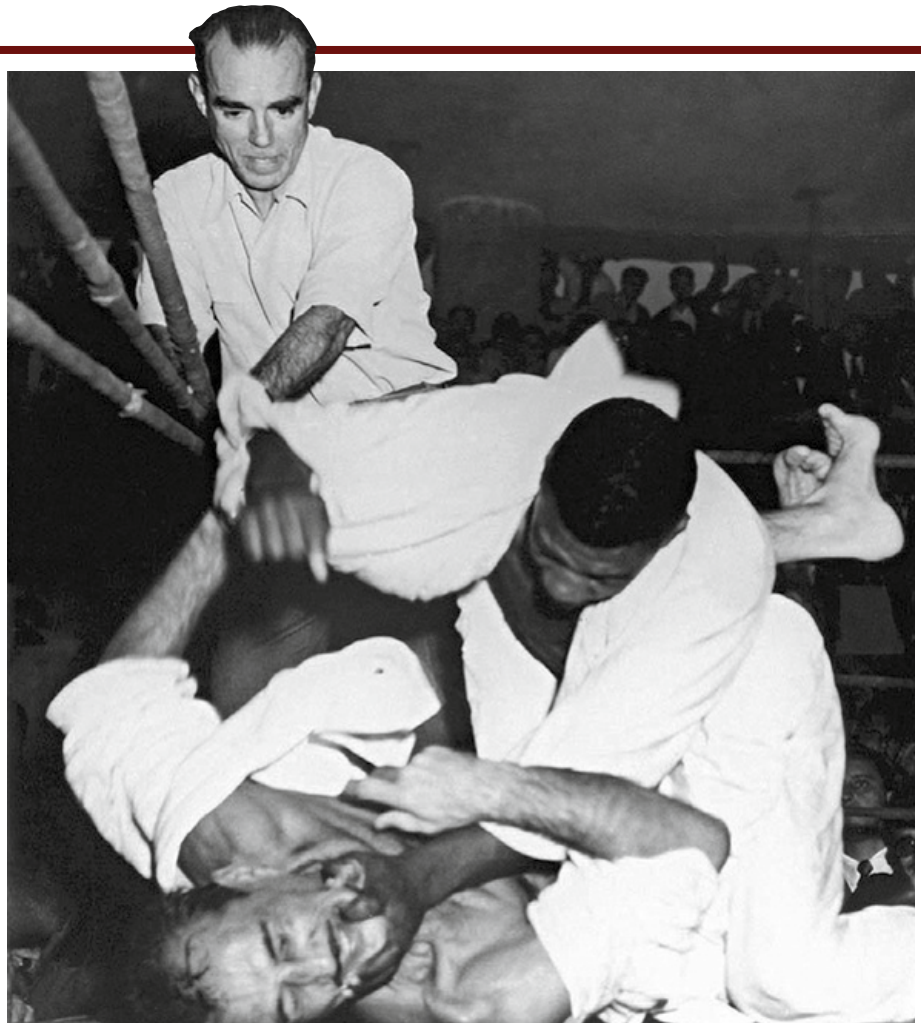
"*Immediately Helio, in one of his temper tantrums, booted Waldemar from his academy. It would have been left at that if months later, in May, Waldemar hadn't given an interview where he criticised the Gracies and challenged Helio to a bout of jiu-jitsu or vale-tudo. From there on the sequence of events took on a life of its own.*"

Carlos' son, Reyson, picks up the narrative, stating that after the fight – an arduous marathon almost four hours in length with no breaks – the Gracie Academy's reputation suffered. In the newspapers, "they started to question the prestige of the Gracie Academy, the Gracie Family."

Born in Bahia, Waldemar grew up poor. His job as a cleaner provided his route to the normally exclusive Gracie Academy mats. Santana's athleticism caught Helio's eye, leading to a position as an instructor and five years of close association. Waldemar represented the school numerous times in the *vale tudo* ring.

That ended after the incident with Helio and Santana's victory over his former employer. Carlos Gracie immediately challenged Santana, in order to restore the family pride. Historically, when Carlos threw out a challenge, it normally meant he had no intention of actually fighting himself. Therefore on the 21st July 1956, he sent one of his sons instead, a certain Carlson Gracie:


Public success against all-comers was to be the
Brazilian jiu jitsu's global expansion, raising its
in Brazil, then in later incarnations of vale tudo
America and Japan. A succession of Gracie family
students would continue to demonstrate the
the national and international stage,
other powerhouse jiu jitsu teams in
covered in future issues of
The original Rio
until eventually
Antonio



"*Waldemar Santana was actually a good friend of mine. We liked each other, but after the fight with my uncle Hélio I called him and told him that we now had a problem. So I challenged him to a fight and said, 'I am your friend, but in the ring we are enemies and I am going to beat you to a pulp!'*"

Carlson was not like his father or his uncle: this time, it was the Gracie fighter who proved physically dominant. Carlson beat on Santana until his corner was forced to throw in the towel. The two men stayed friends, leaving their conflict in the ring, where they would continue to meet over the years. In total, they had six fights, two of which Carlson won, the others were all draws.

Waldemar was to be Carlson's last ever vale tudo opponent, in 1970. As it states in *Choque*:

"*Thereafter Carlson fixed his attention on arbitrating football games and teaching jiu-jitsu and luta livre. Waldemar continued fighting for another five years. It was only when he had a traffic accident in Brasilia in 1975 that he finally quit, at the age of 47. Like Carlson, he kept teaching jiu jitsu and luta livre.*"

Waldemar continued to be involved with vale tudo, moving from the ring to promoting his own fight shows. That would include major events, such as in April 1980. Santana's line up featured the young champion Rickson Gracie against Casimiro Martins, known as 'Rei Zulu'.

As with the Gracies, jiu jitsu was a family business for the Santanas. Waldemar's brother Valdo Santana ran a school in Rio, as well as fighting in the ring himself, such as his match with Ivan Lemos on the 15th May, 1961. According to the author of *Choque*, Valdo was:

"*considered by some to be unbeatable and was certainly Ivan's most formidable opponent to date. Ivan personally respected Valdo for being courageous, playing by the rules, being technical, and never unnecessarily brutalizing his opponents […] Details about the fight are unavailable, apart from the fact the result was a draw.*"

By 1978, Valdo had a quarter-century of teaching under his black belt, at the Academia Santana on Praça Floriano in Rio. BJJ was not the only activity on offer, with options ranging from ballet through to gymnastics and massage.

Waldemar had an academy too, based in Brasilia. He suffered a stroke in December 1982, but recovered sufficiently to keep teaching. Santana passed away two years later, at the age of 58. *Choque* gives him the following obituary, summarising a comparatively short but arguably successful life:

"*In any case he departed in better financial condition than most Brazilian fighters. He had no sizeable debts and left his widow Waldemirina and 18 year old daughter Waldimara with a functioning academy and several homes. If his ring record wasn't impressive enough, he had the distinction of ending up with more than he started with. Not many fighters could say that.*"

TIMELINE

1955
Waldemar Santana beats Helio Gracie, over a gruelling four hours

1956
Carlson reclaims the family honour by defeating Waldemar

1961
Waldemar's brother, Valdo, fights Ivan Lemos to a draw

1970
Carlson fights for the sixth and final time with Waldemar

1975
After a serious car accident, Waldemar retires from the ring

1984
Waldemar passes away at the age of 58

SOURCES: • KID PELIGRO, *THE GRACIE WAY* • LUIZ OTAVIO LAYDNER, *WITH THE BACK ON THE GROUND* • ROBERTO PEDREIRA, *CHOQUE* • *TRADITION: THE RISE OF A GRACIE FIGHTER* • BJJHEROES.COM • SLIDEYFOOT.COM

WORDS: TOM BELL
PICTURES: PROGRESS JJ / JOSH HALVATZIS

LLOYD COOPER: THE YORKSHIRE GRIPPER

You would do well to find a grappler who's had a more productive year so far than Combat Base's Lloyd Cooper.

Chosen by the UK BJJ community to be their representative on one of the biggest stages, the Yorkshire Gripper is busy preparing to make his Polaris Pro debut against AJ Agazarm.

They say that it takes years and years of hard work to become an overnight star, so please try and explain what has happened to you in 2017 so far?
You know what, I completely echo what you've said because it takes years to become an overnight success. This is what really happened though.

Early last year I had a foot operation on a niggling injury. It drove me insane first and foremost, but it really forced me to evaluate where I was and what I wanted to do. In a weird way, I was made to look at my own jiu jitsu and I wasn't happy with it.

The problem is trying to find the balance. I was only bit-part in competing here and there. I just wanted to do bigger and better things and I realised that you do have to be in it to win it. One thing I like to say is that some people are in the right place at the right time, but if you keep showing up at the right place then at some point it will be the right time for you. It's about putting yourself in places and positions, I guess.

Well, one of those places and positions was Lisbon, for the Europeans in January. You took gold at brown belt.
Yeah man, it was! I hadn't done the Euros since blue belt, mainly because of the expense of the whole trip, but it had always been something I dreamed of doing again - "winning the Euros, that'd be cool," but then it also felt like something I'd never be able to achieve.

I'd done a lot of work in coming back from injury over a six-month period and the Europeans was just an experiment for me. I entered quite opened minded and just wanted to play my game and see what happened. I think after the first fight I thought, "hang on a minute, I might do some damage here!" and then I did, submitting my way to gold.

"YOU KNOW WHAT, AJ (AGAZARM) KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING. WHETHER HE'S A NICE GUY OR WHETHER HE IS NOT, HE IS ALWAYS ON THE PEOPLE'S LIPS"

A lot of positive thoughts go through my head though!

This year, an overnight success: kick-starting the year with Euros gold, then you got your black belt, then you won £2000 at Densetsu, then she said "yes" to you on stage (congrats!), then you'll fight Paddy Pimblett at Tanko and then you've got Polaris against AJ Agazarm.

How did you become the busiest man in UK BJJ?
I know it sounds daft but I'm being quite savvy about it. All of us think it would be nice to have a break or a few weeks off, but whilst the success is there and there's a bit of hype that is getting me on these shows, you have to ride with it.

As I said, you have to be in the right place. But so far, it has been nuts! My phone has nearly melted so far this year. Since winning Densetsu my phone has been going off non-stop. I've had texts and Facebook messages every day.

I imagine it's like a wave. I have to ride it as long and hard as I can before the wave ends, or I come off. As long as there are people being put in front of me, I'll keep trying to beat them up.

Talking of waves, you have a tsunami heading your way in the form of AJ Agazarm.
You know what, AJ knows what he's doing. Whether he's a nice guy or whether he is not, he is always on the people's lips. He's always in controversial matches and he's always in the sub-only comps.

He's doing what it takes to maintain his professional career

and I respect that. He asked UK grapplers who they wanted to fight him and after my success with Densetsu, people went crazy and put my name down.

So, it works. As I pointed out; he had to ask a thousand of my Facebook friends to like his post because he doesn't have any of his own. That works for him, but he has me in front of him now. The community delivered my name and I'm grateful.

He's gone for his usual public marketing strategy and it's coughed up me. I think this time he has gone "Oh s**t!". Last time he got smeared by Jake Shields; it was a tough fight for him, yeah. This time, he's looked out to the UK but I think he was counting on somebody he could just tune up with and make himself look good.

But he hasn't. He's got me, he looks at my recent submission record and he's getting messages online telling him he's going to get his feet ripped off. He's kinda gone "Wait, this is a lot more complicated than I planned!"

Regardless of what he says, I think he's already conceded the first defeat in this battle by insisting it is in the gi and that I drop weight.

That must feel great in your mind.
I said to the organisers, he's been a multiple time world champion at various belts and been a black belt since I was a purple, but he can't fight up one weight class in nogi?

He's the professional athlete, he's the one travelling the world and I'm the one grafting fifty hours a week and trying to do jiu jitsu in my spare time. He's calling the shots, but it doesn't matter to me where he wants to fight, when he wants to fight, however he wants to fight … I'm pumped up and I want to go to war with him.

You have fought sub-only from purple to black. Maybe the size of the stage is going to be a little different, but submission-only isn't alien to you.
Mentally, I've done a lot of work with a guy called Gaz Ogden, working with hypnotherapy. I honestly feel like I'm in an unshakable place mentally right now and I just go through my process.

Years ago, I'd get myself pumped by listening to heavy metal, but then I'd end up over-stimulated and my performance would suffer. Now I get myself into a positive, happy mindset. I listen to reggae and I get my process going. It becomes about me, I don't think about the venue, I don't think about any fans, I don't think about my opponent. I focus on what I'm going to do and going to show.

How long has this approach to mentality been going on?
The thing is, it's a continuous cycle. It has to be something you cultivate all the time and a constant development. In my purple belt days, I made a gear change and started working with Gaz.

I came to realise that the hyper-aggressive mindset doesn't work for me and it became about adapting the change of mentality in everything in life. I have to learn a lot about mental performance at work and I can see a lot of parallels in that.

In operations, my field, it's about facing challenges and difficulties, problem solving and getting the win despite outrageous odds, so I try to draw a parallel between two aspects of my life and it's really been working, especially these last six months. Facing AJ, I know he's a world champ, but I am really, really feeling confident in doing some damage against this guy.

Let's talk about your training then. You work 50 hours a week and spend two hours commuting. That's 12 hours a day gone. We've seen you train in Manchester, in Bradford, in Pontefract, in Goole.
So, when I originally started training, I spent a year in Sheffield before moving to Manchester for five years during University. I trained at Factory BJJ and actually ended up living with Adam Adshead, so my life was saturated with jiu jitsu. He's the guy who taught me a proper work ethic and about getting s**t done. Then I moved back to Yorkshire and have spent the last three years at Combat Base HQ in Pontefract with Darren and Helen Currie.

There's one question that I always ask myself in life and that is whether it is hard or easy? If you have a s**t day at work, you can make it hard and get in the gym and do the rounds, or you can take it easy and go home.

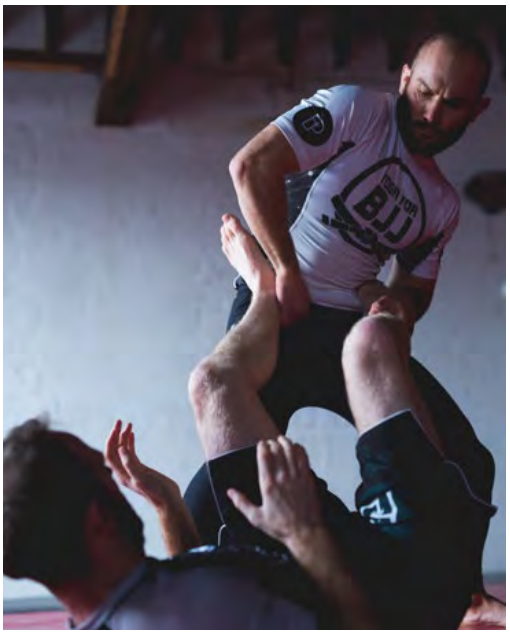
It's about doing what you have to do and not what you want to do. I try to think professionally in all my training. It's a grind, I'm busted up a lot of the time, that's why I put my efforts into yoga for BJJ too. You're working all the time, you do class, you spar with monsters.

"There's one question that I always ask myself in life and that is whether it is hard or easy? If you have a s**t day at work, you can make it hard and get in the gym and do the rounds, or you can take it easy and go home"

The thing is as well, people seem to think that you become a black belt and you can magic your way out of anything, so they bloody crank it on you! You have to be on your game all the time so I train full time; that's five days of jiu jitsu, a full day of yoga and a day of conditioning.

You do vary your training; you train with Darren and Helen Currie, very experienced and older school black belts under Chris Haueter. Your jiu jitsu doesn't necessarily reflect the old school, however. What's training like for you?
At Pontefract, so Combat Base HQ, it's really open and humorous training. We all take the p**s out of each other but mostly it's an environment where people can positively experiment with their own jiu jitsu.

Darren promotes the message that it's all collective within the club and we have a lot of different strengths. When we do team training days we bring in a lot of people who are particularly good at different elements of jiu jitsu and everyone can collectively learn together, so there is no particular style that is encouraged and it's great.



For example, I play a lot of foot locks and a lot of guard but I'm not the only one within Combat Base. It really is a melting pot of styles, it's not like some gyms I visit where everyone plays the same game or everyone is a carbon copy of their coach. We're encouraged to be as diverse as possible.

Free training and no politics are encouraged, as long as knowledge comes back to the gym and makes everyone better. Openness and learning are first and foremost.

Yorkshire is the biggest county in the UK, but truth be told there's not a huge amount of jiu jitsu there. Winning what you have and performing on the stages you do, you're almost blazing the way. Do you feel that?
If I'm helping do that, for sure I like it. I live in a place called Goole and we've just started training there. There's a couple of purples and browns but jiu jitsu there is very young. It's a very small gym.

We travel to Pontefract three times a week, but any further than that you have to travel to Bradford or Leeds. There's just not an abundance, man, and I even look at where I'm from, in Rotherham, there's nothing there either. Sheffield only has two gyms too.

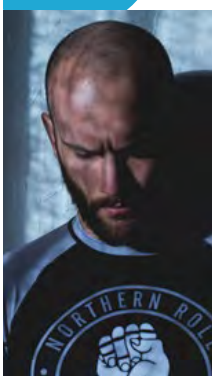
For such a big population, there isn't a great amount. You look across to Manchester and the North West and there's a ton. It's strange for me, coming up in the Manchester jiu jitsu scene. Before the likes of BJJ247 doing comps, before even Grab and Pull, it was Ground Control. I've been lucky to have that scene nearby where there are tons and tons of gyms and it isn't as busy in Yorkshire.

It's strange, jiu jitsu does seem to populate the M62 corridor but we have a way to go until we're up there with Manchester and London.

It's not like you aren't helping, though!
I'm doing my best to put it on the map!

LLOYD COOPER

Lloyd Cooper is a black belt representing Combat Base in Yorkshire



"One thing I like to say is that some people are in the right place at the right time, but if you keep showing up at the right place then at some point it will be the right time for you"

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THE

MARTIAL

PATH

WORDS AND PORTRAITS: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

SHOYOROLL

KENNY FLORIAN

"I'VE NOT DONE COMMENTARY FOR A WHILE BUT, TO BE CANDID, I DO THINK IT'S LACKING A LITTLE IN TERMS OF ADDRESSING THE GROUND GAME"

Having retired from MMA in 2011, "KenFlo" left the sport 14-6 as a professional, with a staggering 12 of his wins coming via KO or submission. His record reads like a who's who of the lightweight division, having faced stalwarts such as Diego Sanchez, Sean Sherk, BJ Penn and Takanori Gomi to name a few.

Staggeringly, Florian is one of only two fighters to have competed in four different weight classes in the UFC: middleweight, welterweight, lightweight and featherweight. Having fought for a title strap on many occasions, mixed it with legends of the sport and taken part on the first season of *The Ultimate Fighter,* KenFlo is an iconic athlete of his generation – so where did it all begin? In a story that will no doubt resonate with readers, it was Brazilian jiu jitsu that first caught Florian's attention.

"It's the same story as everybody else," Kenny explains. "I was fascinated by what Royce Gracie was able to do to people in the Octagon. I looked at that and thought 'ok, cool, there's a systematic approach to fighting; a little guy can beat a big guy'. That really made sense to me. I went to a Royce Gracie seminar and was just hooked man, I couldn't stop thinking about it."

Though Florian dabbled in karate, judo and other disciplines as a child, jiu jitsu was to become his focus as he grew older. Before he'd even found an academy, grappling sessions with his sibling were deemed good enough preparation for entering his first tournament.

"I think I competed after maybe a month of training with my brother in our basement," says Kenny. "We entered the intermediate division at this tournament: I lost in the final, submitting everyone on route, and my brother won his division, with submissions in every match. People were like, 'where do you guys train?' At that point, we literally just trained in our basement (laughs). Anyway, we found out about a black belt in Boston, Roberto Maia, and went down to train with him from then on."

Under the guidance of Roberto Maia, Kenny fully immersed himself in jiu jitsu, working his way through the belts as his love for the art developed. Haven fallen for jiu jitsu's applicability in 'real' fighting situations, it wasn't long before he was on the look out to test his newly cultivated skills away from the tatami.

"Around 2003, I think I was a brown belt then, I got this feeling that if I was doing Brazilian jiu jitsu, I should really know how to defend myself in real fights," Kenny states. "I was curious about how I'd be able to perform against other trained martial artists; how would it go down. The unknown sort of scared me, and that's why I kind of ran towards MMA.

"So, an amazing martial artist and mentor of mine, John Frankl, got cut badly in a fight and it was stopped. I was like, 'I want revenge for John.' So I ended up fighting the guy who beat John, and this time I won. I really only intended on having one fight, but I thought I'd try one more with gloves, because that first match was just open palm strikes. I'd done a little bit of striking at this stage, but the whole thing for me was testing my Brazilian jiu jitsu.

"I went on to win my first fight with gloves on. Then I decided to do another fight because I was already in Brazil training a lot of nogi. I won that fight as well, but none of this was really a challenge; I'd managed to avoid getting hit in all the matches and I still didn't feel like I'd been tested. I guess that's why I kept knocking on the door and getting back in there."

In 2001 the entrepreneurs and investors, Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta, bought the UFC for $2,000,000 - quickly spearheading the organisation with their friend, Dana White. Back in the early '00s MMA was barely even in existence and the UFC was losing money rapidly; tirelessly battling the stigma associated with 'cage fighting' and its original marketing.

However, in 2005, the premier season of *The Ultimate Fighter* proved to be the catalyst that changed the fate of the UFC and mixed martial arts as a sport, while also catapulting Kenny Florian into the limelight. He entered the arena on the night of Combat Zone 7 blissfully unaware that his slot against Drew Fickett would be his ticket into the (yet established) big league of UFC stardom.

"I think it was my fourth or fifth fight when I went up against Drew Fickett," Kenny recalls. "Drew had had around 30 fights at this stage, was on a six-fight win streak and had beaten a few jiu jitsu black belts; this felt like it was going to be a big test. We ended up having a freaking war; I definitely learned what it was like to get punched in the face that night.

"I lost a split decision in a really close fight, and, as fate would have it, Dana White was in the crowd because he wanted to recruit Drew Fickett for the first season of *The Ultimate Fighter*. After the fight, Dana came back to my dressing room and said, 'hey kid, I thought you were going to get your ass kicked.' Anyway, he thought I'd won the fight and said I needed to come out and do an interview for the first season of the show."

"So, the first season of *The Ultimate Fighter* had two weight divisions: one at 205lb and one at 185lb. The people on the show knew I was around 155lb, so when they asked how I'd be able to compete I just said 'it's cool, I've done absolute tournaments in jiu jitsu. Don't worry about it.' So that's how that went down."

KENNY FLORIAN

The premier season of *The Ultimate Fighter* showcased a cast of future MMA stars: Josh Koscheck, Diego Sanchez, Mike Swick, Forrest Griffin, Stephan Bonner and – of course – Kenny Florian all frequented the first house on the now iconic TV series. Bonner and Griffin's light heavyweight final is often referred to as the most important fight in the history of MMA. The bout was an absolute cracker; aired live on Spike TV and endearing a whole new audience to the beauty of proper mixed martial arts.

Though the original *Ultimate Fighter* turned out to be something special, Florian can't say it felt like that as a competitor: "Hand on heart, it really didn't feel special at the time. In my head, I was wondering if this piece of crap show would even make it to cable (laughs). There was some crazy stuff going on in the house, but I didn't know if people would find that interesting; turns out they did, and of course some of the fights – Forest and Stephan being the obvious one – really made the show a hit."

And so began the UFC boom, with KenFlo being swept along for the ride. Life as a jiu jitsu student had to take a back seat, along with his kimono, with the focus now on becoming the best MMA athlete he could be. "I think there had to be a departure from it (BJJ) in order for me to go and learn these other skills,' says Kenny in reflection. "After *The Ultimate Fighter,* I had to stop thinking about representing BJJ and concentrate on becoming a complete mixed martial artist."

Despite losing out to Diego Sanchez on *The Ultimate Fighter* lightweight final, Florian returned to action with a win at Ultimate Fight Night 1 against Alex Karalexis. That win initiated a run towards Kenny's first title shot against Sean Sherk, which he lost by unanimous decision. Perhaps agonisingly, he went on to lose two further title shots in his career: once against BJ Penn and also to Jose Aldo, which turned out to be Kenny's last fight.

Though a title never found its way to around his waist, Kenny can rest assured he faced the best, looking back on his experiences with head held high. "The Gomi fight was really cool, because for five to seven years he was considered the best lightweight in the world," says Kenny on his standout moments. "That was a fight I always wanted, as Gomi was a guy I really admired.

"I EXPECT TO SEE THE INNOVATIONS IN THE LEGLOCK GAME TRANSITION OVER TO MIXED MARTIAL ARTS THAT'S FOR SURE"

"I did enjoy fighting BJ, but that was also one of those fights where I'd lost before I'd even gotten in there. I hate having those kinds of excuses, but when you face someone that you really look up to so much, you can get yourself in trouble. For an American Brazilian jiu jitsu guy, BJ was obviously the man, so I really did put him on a pedestal – to my own demise. That said, I do also believe he was just an outright better fighter at that time; his boxing was way better and I just don't think I was at that level yet in my career."

Though life as a UFC fighter ended in 2011, it certainly hasn't spelt the end of the association. Florian has gone on to forge a successful career in the media, working as both a studio analyst and colour commentator for the UFC. His articulate approach to calling

fights has been both entertaining and – more importantly – informative, with the goal of educating the layman on the art of the fight.

"I think anyone 'gets it' when they see a fighter throw a punch, an elbow or whatever, but it's the grappling that requires more detailed explanation and education," Florian explains. "There are so many nuances, so I enjoy delving into the grappling. I mean, I enjoy the striking too, obviously, so try not to have a bias, but I do make sure to give credit to the ground guys and educate people as to what is going on if I can.

'I've not done commentary for a while but, to be candid, I do think it's lacking a little in terms of addressing the ground game. There's not enough being communicated; we use words like 'explosive' and 'strong' too much, instead of explaining control and positioning. If people don't 'get it', they're of course going to boo when they just see two people hugging on the ground."

The 4oz gloves may have been thrown out in the trash, but Florian is a true martial artist, and we know the journey has no ending. Stepping away from competition has allowed for a return to jiu jitsu, with the kimono being the emphasis. Social media has often shown Florian training with the likes of Ryan Hall and other notable BJJ aficionados, confirming his love affair with the art is alive and well.

"It's really fascinating to me,' says Florian on the evolution of jiu jitsu. "One of the things that made me fall in love with jiu jitsu is the non-stop evolution. I guess that's the nature of combat; if you're still trying to shoot a bow and arrow at a dude with a pistol, you're going to be in trouble. The game is always changing and I think that, to a certain extent, jiu jitsu is similar to engineering. You start out with a basic product and then over the years the athletes have been refining processes and making things more efficient."

Jiu jitsu's role in MMA, like the sport itself, is in a state of constant evolution. Royce Gracie proved that jiu jitsu is a necessity, with fighters no longer neglecting the groundwork; the playing field is as level as it's ever been. So, now everyone does jiu jitsu, what does KenFlo think of 'modern' jiu jitsu and its potential to shape the MMA landscape once again?

"I actually think that sometimes we throw things away that we don't completely understand," Florian states. "You know, some of the new stuff could work in MMA – who's actually going out there trying to use it? I think for the street application of jiu jitsu, then you're not really looking to pull guard, but in MMA, I still think there's a lot to explore. I don't know if some of the more modern stuff will translate, but I don't know if it won't either. Like I say, we haven't really seen people try and apply it readily as of yet. There's a lot of research and development to be done.

"I expect to see the innovations in the leglock game transition over to mixed martial arts that's for sure; I'm surprised it hasn't yet, actually. Some people, like Ryan Hall and Rousimar Palhares, have been doing it, but even someone like Palhares has probably refined his technique hugely over the last few years. Obviously the (John) Danaher guys have really been refining things at their gym, so, yeah, I think we will see more of that style implemented into MMA."

At the age of 40, Florian recently decided it was time to dust off his competition kimono. After entering a couple of regional IBJJF events, he was invited to Abu Dhabi to face the legendary Vitor 'Shaolin' Ribeiro. Having been away from competitive jiu jitsu for essentially his whole career, you could have forgiven Florian for turning down this match. After all, facing Shaolin, a former world champion who has been active on the jiu jitsu scene, is a huge fight for anyone.

But KenFlo is on a martial path of development; it's all about getting better: "I mean, talking right after this match with Shaolin, I'm upset, but it's all fun. At the end of the day, it's about improving - even if things were different and I tapped out Shaolin. I think if you'd caught me in this scenario a year ago I would have been way more pissed, and probably wouldn't have wanted to talk about it (laughs).

"Nowadays I have a much better perspective on it and I believe it's all in the journey of a martial artist: it's a rollercoaster, and that's what life is. Sometimes we have this idea that we can control the chaos, but you can't, so life will throw what it can at you and it's up to you to make the best of that. I'll learn a lot from this loss, and I'll definitely try and use it to make me better."

There's much to be learned from such an amazing attitude in an environment where we can easily get carried away with the significance of 'the win'. Kenny Florian has fought the toughest athletes on the biggest stages, but when you get down to the nuts and bolts, it's his journey that is valued the most.

"DANA WANTED TO RECRUIT DREW FICKETT FOR THE FIRST SEASON OF THE ULTIMATE FIGHTER. AFTER THE FIGHT, HE SAID, 'HEY KID, I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO GET YOUR ASS KICKED'"

MAHAMED ALY

IT DOESN'T TAKE A LOT for Mahamed Aly Santos Da Silva to be happy. Give him "a gi, a tatami," and some food for his table and he's good to go. Mahamed is a fast-rising black belt who left Brazil, and everything known and comfortable to him, to chase a dream, not endless wealth, fame, and riches. Mohamed's dream is a simple one; to use the opportunities jiu jitsu has given him and pay it forward by creating opportunity for others. This is his story.

BECOMING A STRIKER

Mahamed was born 23 years ago in Brazil. His father loved combat sports and named his son after his boxing idol. It almost seemed prescient of his father to name his child after one of the most thrilling athletes of all time, because Mahamed is an exciting fighter to watch on the mats. He recently won his first pair of major titles as a black belt at the 2017 IBJJF European Open and No Gi Opens, and is quickly becoming a force to be reckoned with in high-level competition. He has his sights set on Worlds and ADCC.

Before Mahamed found his passion in jiu jitsu, he was a tall and lanky kid with tons of energy to burn. He grew up humbly, "with no money," in Gardenia Azul in West Rio De Janeiro. City of God, the favela depicted in the famed movie by Fernando Meirelles is "just around the corner" from where Mahamed grew up. His parents enrolled him in a special school where courses ran for 10 hours each day, to learn a technical craft and to keep him away from the less fortunate side of daily life in poverty.

Mahamed's strenuous curriculum left little time for sports and play. Not having an outlet to burn energy led to some anxiety growing up. He noted, "I went to a professional school so I could learn regular schooling and a profession; I studied programming, software design. I was supposed to go to college for it after high school, but I didn't because I focused on jiu jitsu. I did a lot of sports, but when I got in high school I didn't have a chance to anymore, and I was feeling super stressed when I was like fifteen, and we didn't understand because I was a calm kid. So, to get rid of the stress, I started doing kickboxing to see if it was from not having sports in my life. The kickboxing helped a lot."

Mahamed began training in kickboxing because he wanted to become an MMA fighter one day. He recalls jiu jitsu being off-putting at first, "A lot of my friends used to train jiu jitsu back then, but I didn't like it. I was like, 'uh, no; I'm not gonna hug other guys,' you know? I was saying that, but they were looking happy training jiu jitsu, super excited and always talking about jiu jitsu. I kept thinking to myself, 'Man, why are they liking that so much?'

WORDS: FELIX RODRIGUEZ PICTURES: MAGGIE LEFT

and then one of the guys called me to do some MMA sparring." Mahamed's tall and lanky frame suited his kickboxing well, but when his partner took things to the ground he found himself the quick recipient of a triangle, and just like that, the jiu jitsu bug had bitten him.

BECOMING A GRAPPLER

Mahamed began to train after a friend invited him to come along with him to Eduardo Brigadeiro's academy. Brigadeiro, a de La Riva black belt, instilled a love for the gi in Mahamed, who stuck to what he was good at early on. "I started doing open guard, closed guard and triangles. I didn't even know about half guard and stuff. I only did closed, open guard, and triangles, and if I wasn't doing them it's because they'd already passed my guard. I trained for like one year only doing that and I got good at it," said Mahamed.

As lower belts, when we catch a higher belt in a sweep or submission we've been working hard at, we feel an enormous sense of pride. When they tell us to stop relying on the same technique all the time, a common, instinctive reaction is that they don't want us to catch them anymore. When this happened to Mahamed, he didn't take it as them not wanting to catch him, he took it as them wanting him to catch up. He noted, "I started doing good with higher belts, and they told me I had to start doing other stuff, because I was getting good at it, but if I only did that [technique] I wasn't learning jiu jitsu. That's when I started doing other stuff, because if I couldn't catch the triangle they passed my guard."

This point was further emphasised at Mahamed's first tournament when he was paired against a very large competitor. Once Mahamed's opponent broke his guard and got a leg over for half guard, he was clueless as to what to do. Much like the triangle during his first experience with jiu jitsu, the feeling of helplessness sparked a hunger to learn the art. "After my first [tournament] all I did back then was half guard. I was doing half guard all the time, and I started to learn that until I wasn't bad. I started improving, then I started to sweep people: now I'm on top so I have to either pass or control them. I started learning a lot, and started doing some wrestling in Brazil, and then I started getting better," said Mahamed.

> "I STUDIED PROGRAMMING, SOFTWARE DESIGN. I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO TO COLLEGE FOR IT AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, BUT I DIDN'T BECAUSE I FOCUSED ON JIU JITSU"

Even though Mahamed was training jiu jitsu he still desired to become an MMA fighter, so when he got an opportunity to train with the Nogueira brothers he jumped at the chance. He started training with them three times a week, and they began to mentor him and prepare him for an eventual career in MMA. Mahamed was tall and heavy for his age, but at 17, he was still just a child, so there weren't

"FOR ME, IF I HAVE A GI, AND A TATAMI AND FOOD ON MY TABLE, MAN, I'M HAPPY! SO FOR ME, OF COURSE THERE IS ENOUGH MONEY IN JIU JITSU"

many opportunities for him to fight in MMA that made sense.

"I was 17 and really tall. I weighed about 95kg [210lb/14stone] so I was big. The Nogueiras gave me some supplements, money for the bus and that was 'what's up' because I never had money from jiu jitsu before. I never knew about supplements and when the guys got me that, I said I'm gonna help them, and then I started to train with them, only no-gi.

"I started to spar a lot and I thought, 'man, I really wanna do MMA', so I changed gyms to only dedicate myself to MMA. MMA didn't work because I was too young and I was too heavy. I was big, but I was still a kid. In Brazil you can't compete like an amateur; they only do professional. Guys only do one amateur and then they do professional. The Nogueiras were like, 'you are gonna train for sure, but for you to compete right now is kind of tricky," said Mahamed.

His BJJ coach suggested that he do BJJ tournaments to quench his appetite for competition. "My jiu jitsu instructor, Everaldo was like, 'man, I think you should fight some jiu jitsu tournaments to get that adrenaline and have some competition experience,' so I thought, 'OK, man let's do that'. I did one tournament; I won and they promoted me to purple belt. From there it was nothing but jiu jitsu anymore. I forgot about MMA," said Mahamed.

LEAVING BRAZIL

Mahamed comes from a home with modest means, and he knew that staying in Brazil would not be the best way for his grappling career to flourish. When presented with an opportunity to train in the USA, he jumped at the offer to train at Team Lloyd Irvin. However, to get to Maryland, Mahamed was going to need to earn some prize money to afford his trip.

Mahamed recalls of his decision to leave Brazil, "I had a nice relationship with Master Lloyd because I met him at Worlds in 2013. He told me that if I wanted to come I could, so I told him, I was going to go to Abu Dhabi, I was going to win and then I'd have money to go. I said we'd talk when I got there, but I lost at Abu Dhabi. I'd never fought open weight before, but I told him, 'hey man I lost today, but tomorrow I'm going to win the open weight and then I'm going to have money to go'. Then I went all the way to the finals, but lost there. To me it was kind of crazy because I'd never done an open weight before."

The money from the second place showing at the Abu Dhabi open weight was enough for Mahamed to purchase his air fare, and after training for a month with Irvin's team he won Worlds. This was the beginning of his ongoing affiliation with the Maryland-based team. Few figures are as polarizing in jiu jitsu as Lloyd Irvin. Love him or hate him, it's hard to deny the quality level of black belt competitors he's produced, such as DJ Jackson and JT Torres. Mahamed was not aware of some of the controversies outside of the mats that surrounded Irvin and some of his former students.

When asked if he knew about their tarnished reputation and if his professors were OK with him coming to TLI, Mahamed was very candid: "In Brazil people don't see it in the same way. They were more like, 'why are you going to an American school?' People didn't really know about the reputation or anything like that, and most didn't know what happened. To be real, I don't know what happened because I never went to the Internet to read about all that stuff.

"My thing is; if the guy is cool with me, I don't have a reason to turn my back on him. I don't know what happened, and I don't really care because he's cool with me and he's opened his doors. That was my position at that time. Then I came here and saw how everyone is very close to each other and they're all friends. When they travel, they stay together, they eat together, they do everything together, and I felt like that's a real team. Then I liked them; I mean those guys really fight for each other, they like each other. I don't really believe all what people say and I don't really care if it's true or not, then I came and I liked it so I just don't think about that anymore," said Mahamed.

Mahamed chose to see past the controversies and bonded with his new teammates, moving permanently to Maryland as a purple belt. Living in a new country presented some challenges at first including getting acclimated to a new language, culture and climate. He recalls of his first months in Maryland, "In the beginning I was a purple belt and [Irvin] helped me a lot. He supported me to get where I am today. Today I do a lot of seminars. I don't do as much as I could because I want to train, but every time I need, I talk to people and they bring me to their school to do the seminars, and I have a primary sponsor, Grips, so things are starting to get good.

"The hardest thing about coming here is the cold, I hate it. Every month it's still bad, every month I talk to Master Lloyd and I tell him I'm going to leave, but then it gets hot again so I calm down. I didn't speak English when I first came, it was hard because I had to learn, and I'm a perfectionist. If I don't do it perfect I get mad. I had to study, and I had to learn English, so now it's getting better."

BECOMING A BLACK BELT

Mahamed won IBJJF Worlds as a purple belt after training at TLI for just a month. This reinforced his belief that he was at the right place to develop his game and excel in competition. When asked about the difference in his abilities as a purple belt first arriving to train in America, versus his current skill set as a black belt, he explained, "I do the same positions as before but I do them better. I'm also smarter, stronger and faster.

"I think a purple belt is already good enough to beat some black belts but don't believe it at first and also don't have the strength and smarts, the patience, to do it consistently. The hard thing for me is patience. When I fight, I want to do everything fast. I want to pull guard, sweep and attack fast. The black belts know the right time to attack, right time to rest, and that's the biggest difference, it's getting better at being patient."

The ability to learn patience came with time and was honed with ardent dedication to training, which by Mahamed's own admission, is pretty much all he does or thinks about when not spending time with his girlfriend. Mahamed lives in Virginia, about 45 minutes away from TLI's academy in Maryland, and takes the 90-minute trip to his academy often twice a day.

"I wake up in the morning, have breakfast and go to the gym. I drill or train for like two hours depending on the day. If it's before a big tournament it's hard practice. If it isn't, then a drill and a regular training with some sparring. Then I go back home, eat and rest a little bit. If I have energy, depending on the day, I'll do conditioning from 6-7 and then I'll go to the evening class. Normally it's two training sessions; one jiu jitsu, then another jiu jitsu or another conditioning, two hours each," said Mahamed.

The constant high-level training with a group of skilled partners led Mahamed to increasing success. He won multiple world titles at the lower belt levels, including IBJJF Worlds as a brown belt, the American Nationals Championship, and placing second at ADCC. As the medals began piling up so did the praise and, eventually, he received the ultimate recognition when he was awarded the rank of black belt from his instructor in September of 2015.

Although the belt didn't confer any super-powers, it has given Mahamed some perspective on a student's journey from white to black belt. He noted, "Everything changed when I got my black belt. My technique, my body, my mind, my self-belief all changed. Right now, I'm a man. I used to be a 15-year-old kid dreaming about life, but not knowing what I should or could do to do my thing. I didn't know if I was good enough to be an athlete, then one day I looked in the mirror and I was an athlete.

"The more I learned, the more I saw that I was going to learn more. As a blue belt and a purple belt sometimes you think 'I got it, I know that s**t already,' but when you get to black belt you figure out that you don't know anything and you need to train more. You realise you'll never be able to learn everything and that's beautiful. I like that.

"MMA DIDN'T WORK BECAUSE I WAS TOO YOUNG AND I WAS TOO HEAVY. I WAS BIG, BUT I WAS STILL A KID"

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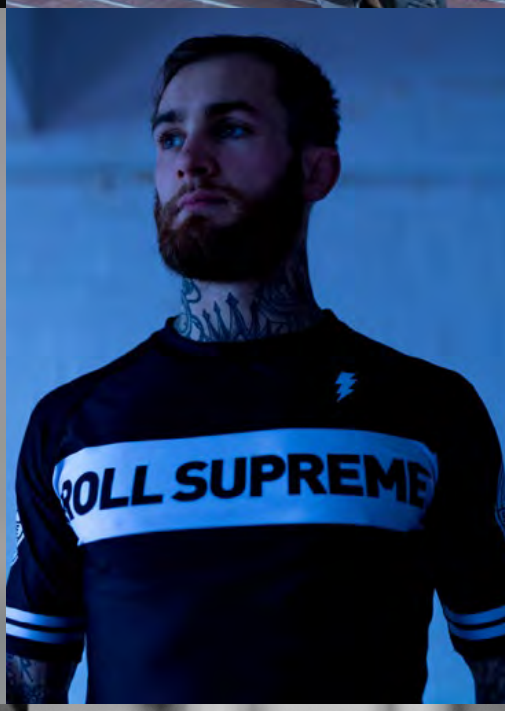
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LIFE AS A BLACK BELT

Mahamed has left his dreams of becoming an MMA fighter behind. Now, he is driven by jiu jitsu and has three major goals set for his professional life: to win Worlds as a black belt, to win ADCC and to eventually give back to the art by becoming a full-time jiu jitsu instructor. The first two goals are immediate; the latter is for further down the road. He noted of his change of heart, "I am 23 years old. I want to win Worlds and ADCC, I don't even think about MMA. Everything I do, I want to be the best. What I see right now in MMA is they don't want Brazilians anymore. They don't want them. If I feel like it's changing, maybe I'll do it one day.

"Jacare, Demian Maia, Brazilians in general are very respectful, they don't like to talk s**t about each other, they like to make money and support their family. Here the sport mentality is about talking trash. Most Brazilians don't even speak English and if they do, they don't want to talk trash, because we know how hard it is and we don't want to talk s**t about the other guy working like me. In MMA, to be successful you have to talk s**t and to me, that's kind of awful."

Mahamed recognises that a path to fame and riches is probably quicker through MMA, but jiu jitsu has his heart and is able to afford him a comfortable lifestyle that brings him satisfaction.

"Yeah, for sure [I can live off jiu jitsu]. I mean, I don't need to be rich to be happy. Right now, jiu jitsu is going to another level, you see a lot of tournaments where they're paying real money. You can't compare it to UFC where you can make hundreds of thousands of dollars in one night, but it's enough to eat, to travel, to be happy and be with your family. I guess it depends on what you want. For me, if I have a gi, and a tatami and food on my table, man, I'm happy! So for me, of course there is enough money in jiu jitsu.

Right now, Mahamed is doing just fine with his sponsorship deal, teaching seminars, and winning prize money from competitions. His goal is to rack up as many medals as possible and enjoy the ride while replicating past successes. "Worlds at brown belt was my best win for sure. When you win open weight it's different; you can win at your division, which is great and super good, but winning open weight against the big tough guys, man that's beautiful. I'm doing a grand prix in three weeks, Worlds and ADCC. I'm thinking about No-Gi Worlds too," said Mahamed.

Mahamed is doing the same things that brought him success at the lower level belts to prepare for his campaign as a black belt competitor. He believes that although the availability of heavy training partners that compete at a high-level has gone down at his school a bit, all he needs is his current teammates and self-belief to achieve his goals.

He noted, "We used to have a lot of big guys: me, Jim Harbison, DJ Jackson, Evert Santos and others, but now DJ went to MMA, Evert and some of the other guys left, and Tim doesn't train that much. Right now, I'm the only big guy. We have some lighter belts, but we're building them to be good enough to train, and they also work. Regularly, mornings and nights, is only me."

When asked if a lack of elite training partners can hurt his progress, he is quick to shoot that notion down. "I don't think so. I think that all you need is to believe in yourself, your game and your work [ethic]. I've been training a lot doing my thing. Of course, if we had a lot of hungry, big guys on the mats, it would be great, but I don't think that's the main thing for you to win. I think the first thing you need is to believe in yourself and if you have that I don't think you need a lot. You can have regular training partners and you're still going to win," said Mahamed.

Mahamed believes in paying things forward. He is grateful for the doors that jiu jitsu has opened for him, and will never forget the help he received along the way towards reaching his goal of becoming a black belt. When his competitive career winds down he plans on becoming an instructor, so that he can help develop and guide would-be martial artists that, like him, find jiu jitsu for the first time and have a desire to succeed at it. He sees this giving back not only as a goal, but a matter of personal obligation, because he believes that he wouldn't be in the position he is today without jiu jitsu.

Mahamed explained, "Opening my own school one day, that's my dream. I think you have to have a legacy. Every man, not just a jiu jitsu guy, needs to have one. They need to be useful. If you get all the medals and all the accomplishments in jiu jitsu, and you don't do anything with that, it's like useless. For me right now, of course I want to win Worlds, I want to win ADCC, but I want to still be able to change peoples' lives like someone did with me.

"Jiu Jitsu is a great way to change lives and learn how to live. If you have a job, or a kid, or anything, you need something like jiu jitsu to teach you how to live. That's what I want to do with my whole life, use jiu jitsu to help people. I want the opportunity to give people opportunities."

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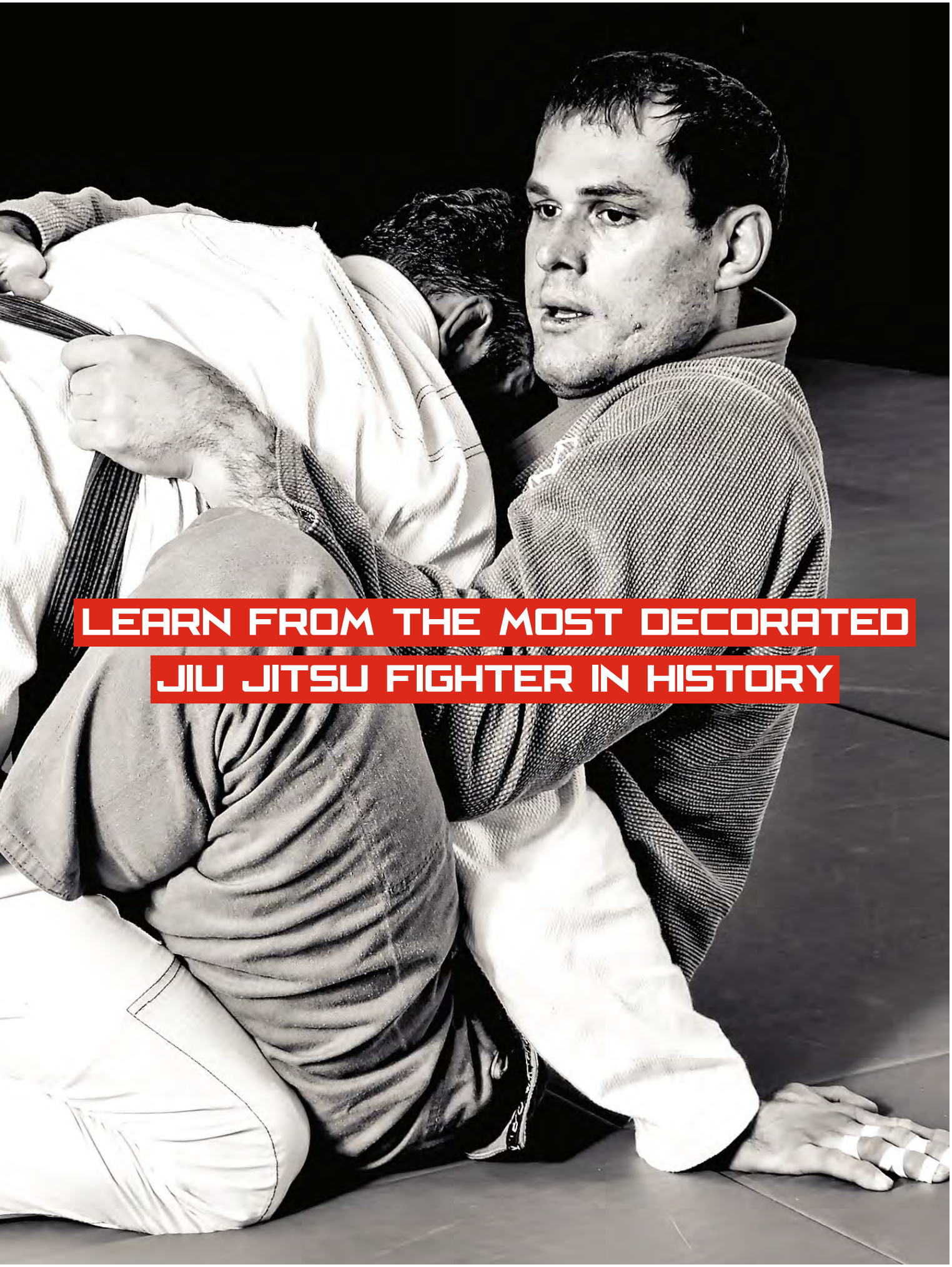
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FROM GIS TO... GRIPTAPE

For many practitioners, it is difficult to narrow jiu jitsu down to one definitive characteristic. When asked "Why do you do it?" many would be hard pressed to give a single answer. While the *Art Suave* helps to develop a very discernible set of physical skills, it also works on a number of internal aspects, such as creative expression, mental toughness and a sense of personal improvement, which are much harder to nail down.

Few other sports or pursuits develop these skills in the same way. However, skateboarding may be one of the few activities that does. Jiu jitsu's connections to skateboarding's older brother, surfing, are much more established. From the beaches of Rio to the coastline of southern California, jiu jiteros have been riding waves between training sessions for ages. It was surfers who wanted to take their sport on land that gave rise to skateboarding and created an entirely new sport that much like jiu jitsu, is defined by not only physical and mental dimensions, but ultimately, the pursuit of self-improvement as well.

While skateboarding's connections to jiu jitsu are less well-known than jiu jitsu's love affair with surfing, a number of high level athletes from both skating and grappling have been crossing over and combining their passions for years. Kron Gracie is perhaps the most famous skater in the jiu jitsu world, but there are many others.

"I've met quite a few people on the mat who also skate. I've skated with Jeff Glover and Magid Hage in Guatemala while we were touring around before a competition there," said Jonathan Satava, the New York-based competitor and Marcelo Garcia black belt. "I've also skated with Marcelo Garcia and I've seen videos of Lucas Lepri hitting a kickflip. Even though we might not always get acknowledged, we are out there."

the competitor

Satava, who recently took double gold at the IBJJF No Gi Pan Ams and added a silver at No Gi Worlds, is another example of a high level competitor who got his start in skateboarding. Long before he was winning IBJJF titles, Satava spent his youth learning kickflips and sliding rails on a skateboard.

"I had a friend in school that was really into skating – like one of those kids that just couldn't seem to get enough. He would bring those Tech Deck finger skateboards to science class and we'd flip them around the entire time," he said. "I kind of knew what all the tricks were because of the Tony Hawk's Pro Skater video games, but I was just fascinated by it all and eventually, I found time to pick up a board myself. It was around the time the other kids in my neighborhood got into skating, so it was good timing and it introduced me to a whole new culture."

Satava started skating when he was twelve years old and still skates to this day. He says that although he had some martial arts experience as a kid, he didn't find jiu jitsu until he was eighteen when he joined a club while he was in college, and was instantly hooked. "I still skate occasionally, but it's not what it used to be because jiu jitsu is my priority now. It's funny, I see stairs that I used to ollie as kid and I wonder if I could still do it, but with jiu jitsu as my career, I can't risk getting hurt. I like to tell myself I could still do it though," he said with a laugh. Satava added that he still enjoys skating and learning new tricks, but that it's mostly about spending time with friends and enjoying their shared passion for the board.

the skater

Tom Knox got his first taste of grappling through judo. As a child, Knox and his brother travelled across the United States competing in numerous national-level tournaments. However, in 1983, a young Knox found an old skateboard in his garage and discovered a new love. Knox continued competing in judo for another four years while simultaneously developing his skills on the board. At age 16, he reached a crossroads and was forced to pick between judo and skating. He chose skateboarding and in 1989, turned pro with

BY SCOTT DAVIDSON

the infamous Santa Cruz Skateboards team. Knox was immediately successful as a professional skateboarder, winning contests with legends of the sport like Mike Vallely in the field and filming video parts with some of the biggest companies out there.

It was not until 1997 when Knox went back to school at Fresno State in California that he got back into judo through the school's club. There, he met a group of jiu jiteros who sparked his interest in the sport. In 1999, Knox started training with Mauricio "Tinguinha" Mariano. Over the next few years, Knox bounced between gyms in southern California before settling at Cleber Luciano's gym in Huntington Beach, where he would go on to receive his purple, brown and black belts. In 2008, Knox opened his own gym, Elite Team Jiu Jitsu.

Though Knox now competes in jiu jitsu, recently taking a silver medal in the Masters' 4 black belt division at the IBJJF European Championships, he has not hung up his board. Before the Europeans, Knox posted a video from a skate park in Portugal, which he called his "warm up" for the tournament. "I can go pretty much anywhere in the world now and put out an Instagram post and say 'who wants to skate?' and guys literally just show up to the hotel and start taking me around," Knox said. "I did that in Lisbon recently and they took me to some parks and to the beach. It's really cool to have that access."

Knox isn't the only skater who's added jiu jitsu to his life. Skateboarding legend Bob Burnquist has also been spotted on the mats recently. Knox said that other notable skateboarders such as Chet Thomas and Brian Sumner have also started training in jiu jitsu. Joel Tudor, who holds a black belt from Rodrigo Medeiros and is an ADCC veteran and IBJJF Pan Am champion, was a professional skater and surfer before turning to jiu jitsu full time.

Balancing skateboarding and jiu jitsu is sometimes difficult, according to Knox. He recently filmed a video part with Transworld Skateboarding, one of the longest running skateboarding magazines and who filming with is considered a major accomplishment amongst skaters. At the same time however, Knox still finds time to grow his own gym and train himself. "When I'm skating, I think 'don't get hurt so you can't train,' and when I'm training I think 'don't get hurt so you can't skate," said Knox.

Developing a physical edge

While jiu jitsu is known as "the gentle art," most people who practise it will tell you that it can be anything but that sometimes. Despite the nickname, jiu jitsu practitioners, and especially competitors, develop a physical toughness that is unmatched, aside from other combat sport athletes and maybe skateboarders.

"In skating, you fall a lot to get it right," Satava said. But what makes skaters so tough? Jiu jiteros hone their art on padded mats, but skaters practise on concrete, a surface that is significantly less forgiving. Just like in jiu jitsu, twisted limbs, bruises and broken bones aren't all that uncommon in skateboarding and simply come with the territory. Knox echoed Satava's thoughts on the topic, but also spoke of how skateboarding helps to develop skills such as balance and physical strength, which translate well to jiu jitsu.

"They're sports that go hand and hand and I think they both benefit each other. If we're talking about sports, the core strength and balance you develop in both is important," said Knox. "And the toughness, like c'mon, us skaters take a beating. The balance you develop in skating carries directly over and makes you hard to sweep and take down."

Watch skateboarders and it's easy to see what Knox is talking about. The sense of balance one develops learning to stand on a skateboard, let alone sliding down a handrail or jumping down a set of stairs on one, is inherently similar to jiu jitsu and gives one an edge in grappling. Additionally, skaters develop a certain body awareness and physical dexterity, especially with their feet, that carries over to jiu jitsu. Both open guard play in jiu jitsu and flipping a skateboard take a high degree of dexterity with one's feet and legs. There are very few activities that develop this skill, but skateboarding and jiu jitsu are again similar in this respect.

The learning curve

Another thing jiu jitsu practitioners will tell the untrained is that it's hard to compare how the art is learned with anything else. Anyone who has made it past white belt knows that jiu jitsu has one of the steepest learning curves of any pursuit out there, and that learning it isn't simply a matter of studying or reading a book. In jiu jitsu, there's no substitute for mat time and the blood, sweat and tears that come with it. Skateboarding is much the same. Just as it can take weeks or even months to learn fundamental jiu jitsu skills, getting a handle on even the most

"I KIND OF KNEW WHAT ALL THE TRICKS WERE BECAUSE OF THE TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER VIDEO GAMES, BUT I WAS JUST FASCINATED BY IT ALL AND EVENTUALLY, I FOUND TIME TO PICK UP A BOARD MYSELF" - JON SATAVA

basic skateboarding tricks can take just as long. For some, even standing on the board can prove to be difficult.

Ultimately, it comes down to the individual in either sport. It takes not only a great deal of willpower, but also an unwavering desire to learn through failure. "They're both individual sports. You obviously need a partner to train jiu jitsu, but when you're out there competing, it's you versus them," Knox said. "It's similar when you're out skating and trying to land a trick on a rail or something."

Both skateboarding and jiu jitsu require a great amount of attention to detail. Both jiu jitsu techniques and skateboard tricks require continual refinement and adjustment. The smallest mistakes can be the difference between success and failure. "You have to keep drilling things. You have to keep doing armbars and stuff before you get it down. It's the same in skating; you can't just do a trick once and think you have it wired. You have to keep doing it or you'll lose it," said Knox.

Satava noted how skateboarding and jiu jitsu require the same degree of attention to technicality and patience for refinement. "The learning process is similar in both. There's a technical analysis of what you're trying to do," Satava said. "In skating, you keep adjusting it until you nail the trick. Once you get it, you keep raising the level. Can you do it again? Can you do it over or off something? Can you chain it together with other tricks you've already mastered? If you think about jiu jitsu, it's the same: can you do an armbar? Can you hit it on a blue belt or a brown belt? On a big guy? On a fast guy? Can you connect it to a sweep attempt or guard pass?"

IN PURSUIT OF SELF

Jiu jitsu practitioners and skateboarders share one fundamental, defining characteristic; their independent nature. Undoubtedly, the two sports have a team and social aspect, but both are inherently individual sports. As Knox said, jiu jitsu competition is very much "you versus them." Skateboarders fight similar battles, but against obstacles such as rails, ramps or gaps. "Jiu jitsu and skateboarding are similar communities. At their core, both sports are independent," Satava said. "You always have a team or crew, but when it comes down to performance, it's mostly on you."

What draws people to these pursuits? While team sports attract one type of individual, individual sports such as jiu jitsu and skateboarding attract another type entirely. These types of people thrive on being the lone wolf, but more importantly, on another deeper trait; individual expression. Simply put, jiu jitsu and skateboarding provide athletes with an avenue to express themselves creatively.

Take any two jiu jitsu competitors and you'll find unique twists on techniques, each suited to the practitioner's physical attributes and personality. Take another two and you'll see drastic variations in style. Just like jiu jitsu practitioners, no two skateboarders are exactly the same. With thousands of tricks and things to skate and an even greater number of skaters out there, the possibilities are similarly endless. Everyone does tricks a little differently or views the things they skate in a new way.

"You look at skateboarding and everyone has their own style. In jiu jitsu too, you've got guard players; there's open guard, spider guard, half guard and you have top players, leg draggers and so on. The two sports are so similar once you start breaking it down," said Knox.

ONE AND THE SAME

Jiu jitsu and skateboarding exist in the same world and in similar spaces. Both sports were born out of outlaw roots, with jiu jitsu coming from no-holds-barred combat sports and skateboarding coming from the punk rock scene. Balance, strength and toughness are requisites in the two sports as well (luckily for athletes, both sports do an outstanding job of developing these traits). Learning to skateboard or to do jiu jitsu is similar in that it requires a great deal of attention to detail, a mind for technical adjustments and most importantly, an unshakable drive to improve. Finally, jiu jiteros and skaters flourish due to the independent nature of their chosen sports and because of the freedom of expression they are providing by pursuing them.

With so many parallels, clearly skaters can learn from jiu jitsu and jiu jitsu practitioners can learn from skateboarding. "The two are so similar that skating has helped me view jiu jitsu through a different lens and vice versa," Satava said.

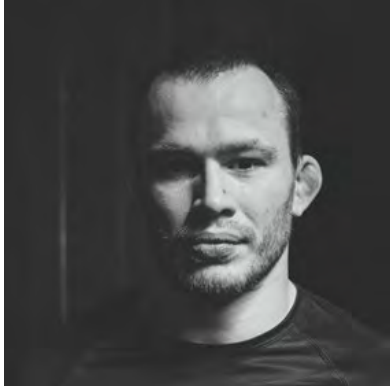
Shoping site : www.b-j-j.com (日本語)
www.btfightgear.com (English)

www.bullterrier.co.jp

WORDS: OLIVER GEDDES

THE TWO UNIVERSAL RULES OF BJJ: PART 2

In my last column, I went into some detail about the importance of driving your head into your opponent's jaw...



Oli Geddes is a seasoned competitor, referee, globetrotter, half guard connoisseur and black belt under Roger Gracie

...and how it can act as an exceptional method of controlling the bottom player, as well as being, well, more than a little uncomfortable and distracting for the bottom player. In this issue I move on to my second universal rule of BJJ:

When in bottom position - if in doubt, throw your opponent on their face.

I know, I know. This is the gentle art and we aren't supposed to be doing things like that. But I'll try to give you some justification for this one.

When you're in bottom position you have a number of different ways to sweep someone, but generally it comes down to three different approaches: you can try to pull your opponent to the side and go around them, you can push them away from you and go forwards into them, or you can try to get underneath them.

Generally, in the modern jiu jitsu game, the third option is the one you will see most often. This is because with top game being played to a higher level every year, it's very hard to create the space required to go around someone or to just push them off you. A good top game player will try to keep your hips locked down and will do everything they can to not give you the angle of approach to go around their grips or their combat base knee.

In this column I will look at each of the three different approaches to sweeping in turn, and explain how pulling your opponent on his face is important for each.

GOING AROUND YOUR OPPONENT

This is the category for sweeps such as collar drags, arm drags and back takes. In general, the top player is going to be trying to remain square-on with the bottom player to deny them the ability to move around to their back or side. They could just hip away and try to move to a better position, but the top player's ability to be mobile and adjust for a new angle will generally be superior to the bottom player's, simply because they are less affected by friction and gravity.

As such, just trying to create space will generally be countered by the more mobile top player. However, if the bottom player can break the top player's balance, impairing their ability to change angles, then these kinds of sweeps become more viable.

This leads us to pulling your opponent onto their face - if you have a strong grip on the collar, arm or back of your opponent and you are able to create enough force to unbalance them forwards, they have two options. They can land on their face (obviously not optimal) or they can base out to avoid falling and regain their balance.

As soon as they base out, their weight is placed temporarily on their hands and their angle is usually significantly altered, not only exposing the side of their body more easily (see Open Face Theory from my last column) but also preventing them from adjusting their position to counter any attack due to their poor weight distribution. This either opens up the space to move towards their back to set hooks, or makes their leg light enough so that single leg pickups become a strong sweeping option.

PUSHING YOUR OPPONENT AWAY

This is the category for sweeps such as blast double legs, straight single legs, ankle picks, and techniques of that kind. Generally, more athletic competitors will find techniques of this kind easier, due to being faster and more able to penetrate before the top player is able to adjust for the attack, but that doesn't mean they aren't accessible to less naturally explosive practitioners.

Pulling your opponent onto their face is, again, the route here. When you draw an opponent forwards, presuming you are unable to generate enough force for them to actually base out, they will still naturally pull back to try to regain their balance. This will create a small amount of space between the two of you and weaken any defensive positioning they may have, such as a combat based knee.

If your timing is good, you can use this space to start moving to your knees and driving forward, setting up any of a number of wrestling style sweeps. If your opponent remains on balance, or you don't set up the movement with the initial pull, you will not be able to create the space required to get to your knees and will remain stuck on your back and exposed to follow-up passing attempts.

GETTING UNDERNEATH YOUR OPPONENT

This is the category for many of the remaining common sweeps, including deep half guard, x-guard, kiss of the dragon, berimbolos and a number of back-taking transitions.

Whilst both of the other options are undeniably strong, they can be shut down to an extent by an opponent with good balance and a defensive posture. What is often a more reliable first step is to try to get underneath your opponent. This prevents them from using their hands and body positioning to keep you locked down in the bottom position, as well as making it more difficult for them to find a stable base since you are effectively becoming the floor underneath them.

When you draw your opponent forwards onto their face or hands, you naturally bring your body underneath theirs as well, allowing you to set up follow-up sweep combinations. If you were to pull enough, it's possible they would go all the way over you and you could transition straight out the back into a sweep.

Against better opponents, it's unlikely that you will be able to unbalance them to this extent without a significant size and strength advantage, so you will usually have to settle for the halfway point of establishing a new guard underneath their body. You can then either look to move out to their back or top position in a more gradual transition from there, or, should they try to disconnect and bail from this less stable position, they will generate space that you would be able to use to set up a different style of sweep or back take.

A brief finishing note - like most transitions in jiu jitsu, the initial unbalancing in all of the above situations has to be done with absolute commitment. If you only half commit to the initial pull, you are unlikely to significantly unbalance your opponent and if they don't have to use any real effort to regain their balance and position then it's likely all of your follow-up transitions will simply fail, because your opponent will be in too strong a position for any of them to even get started.

So pull, and pull hard, and you'll be surprised at what opportunities arise. Until next time!

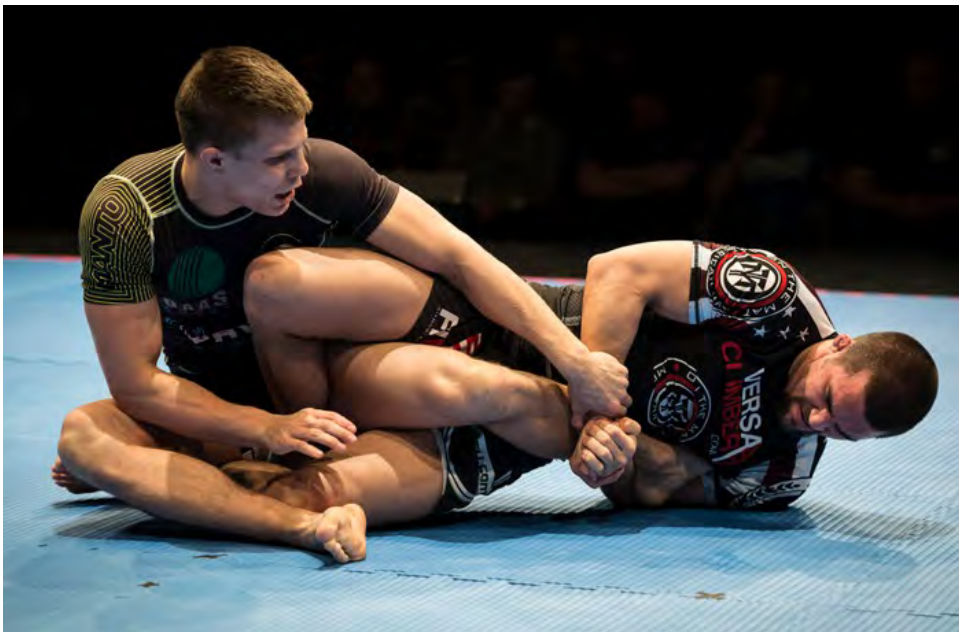
WORDS: NIC GREGORIADES

LEG-LOCKS 101

There's a reason why guys like Garry Tonon are killing it with leg-locks in elite-level competition - they work.

I've always been a fan of lower-body submissions. There's something inherently satisfying about catching somebody with one of them. Some people call leg-locks 'The Great Equalisers of Grappling' and I believe there is some truth to that.

When I started training jiu jitsu, I had come from a submission-wrestling background and I already knew a decent amount about the lower-body submission game. This knowledge helped me to hold my own against more experienced BJJ players who didn't have the same understanding of this aspect of grappling.



THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO LEARN

Even as little as 10 years ago, BJJ had a pretty basic leg-lock game. The explosion in its popularity and the increase in cross training has caused great interest and growth in this part of the art. The best submission grapplers of today have better leg-locks than even traditional lower-body attack specialists, like sambo players.

Now there are even whole systems based around a single type of leg-lock (check out Oli Geddes' Foot-Lock Mastery - it's excellent) and esoteric attacks like calf-crushers, Estima-locks and knee-separators are becoming more and more commonplace. There's never been a better time to develop this aspect of your jiu jitsu.

KNOW THE RULES

In the IBJJF ruleset, all leg-locks with the exception of the straight foot-lock (sometimes known as the Achilles) are illegal up until the brown and black belt levels and some are even illegal at brown belt. In addition to this, even the straight foot-lock has limitations placed on it (you cannot reap the opponent's knee while attempting it). It's up to you to check both the ruleset of your academy and the competition.

But, just because a move might be illegal at your belt level, it doesn't mean you shouldn't practise it. If you're going to be a black belt, you'll need to know what a knee-bar is and if you're going to train no-gi, you'll need experience using and defending against the heel-hook, etc.

"THE BEST SUBMISSION GRAPPLERS OF TODAY HAVE BETTER LEG-LOCKS THAN EVEN TRADITIONAL LOWER-BODY ATTACK SPECIALISTS, LIKE SAMBO PLAYERS"

Be aware that some guys get super upset if you try lower-body subs on them - make sure you clear it with your training coach and training partners. Everybody has met that white belt who travels to different academies and tries to heel-hook the higher grade students so he can feel like King-Ding-a-Ling for a few minutes. Don't be that guy. Nobody likes that guy.

SAFETY FIRST

Always apply leg-locks as smoothly and slowly as possible. This is good practice for all submissions, but especially important for the dangerous lower-body attacks. Don't go all Palhares on your training partners and try to cripple them. That's bad karma.

If you start using leg-locks, you will inevitably have to defend against them more often. Keep in mind that your legs and feet are naturally less sensitive than your arms and hands, so sometimes you can't feel just how close a submission is to injuring you until it's too late. You can go from feeling totally safe to having a wrecked knee in a split second. Tap early and tap often.

Also, be aware that most lower-body attacks cause you to lose positional dominance. For example, if you're inside an opponent's half-guard and you see a knee-bar opportunity, remember that it will cause you to give up both your pass and the top position. If you decide to use a technique like this, have a back-up plan in case it fails.

IMPORTANT COMPONENTS

The best lower-body submissions have four things in common:

1. They completely immobilise the leg being attacked.

Usually, once a lower-body submission is set in, any movement in your opponent's leg dilutes the amount of leverage that can be applied. For example: If you have your opponent in a knee-bar, any rotation of his foot or knee will relieve the pressure of the submission.

(Note: This is not always the case. In certain instances, movement of the opponent's leg will actually amplify the submission.)

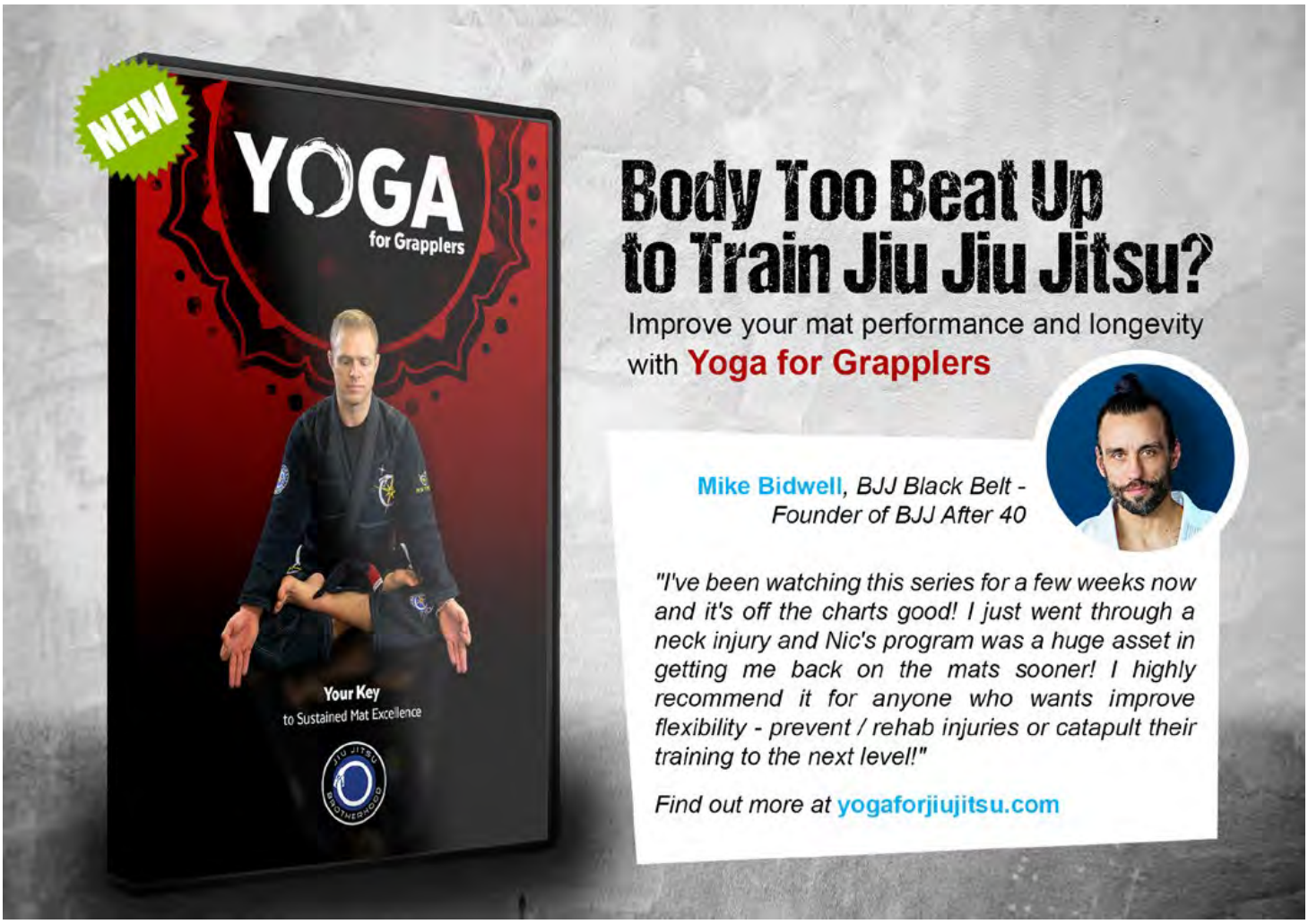
2. They completely immobilise the opponent's pelvis.

This is closely related to the point above. Almost all leg-locks work better when you shut down movement of your opponent's pelvic girdle. If you fail to do this, he will be able to either change the angle or create movement of his leg that will prevent you from applying leverage correctly.

3. They make it very difficult for the opponent to counter-attack.

A great leg-lock will not put you in immediate danger of a counter-attack. A couple of years ago, I was training with a technical black belt who outweighed me by 20lb. I went for a toe-hold on him but my set up was sloppy and left one of my feet exposed to attack. He saw his chance and countered with a toe-hold of his own.

We were both using the exact same technique from the exact same position, but his bigger bone structure and increased strength meant that my ankle was the first to give. Cue an injury that took 3 months to heal….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4. They either have the leg fully bent or fully straightened.

Lower-body attacks can be broadly categorised into two types: those in which the opponent's leg is bent at the knee (e.g. heel-hook), and those in which it is not (e.g. knee-bar). It's important to identify which of these conditions is required for the attack you're using and then make sure that condition is met.

(Note: One of the smartest things you can do is practise attacking combinations that switch between the two. The most basic example of this is the knee-bar / toe-hold combination.)

ROAD MAP

If you're predominantly a gi BJJ player, this is the road map for developing a well-rounded lower-body submission game that I'd suggest that you follow:

White to Blue Belt:
Master the straight foot-lock. The mechanics and principles in this attack carry over to most other leg-locks. And, even though it's considered a 'basic' attack, when used properly it can be devastating.

Purple Belt:
Here is where you should start experimenting with toe-holds and knee-bars. It's generally good etiquette not to try them on lower grades unless you have a spoken agreement that you're going to use them. You should also clear it with higher-grades.

Brown Belt:
By the end of your brown belt you should have mastered the three basic attacks (straight foot-lock, toe-hold, knee-bar) and started experimenting with the more advanced attacks.

Black Belt:
You should now have a deep repertoire of lower body submissions and know how to set-them up effectively from several positions. Here is where you can start mastering the more complex techniques (knee-separators etc.)

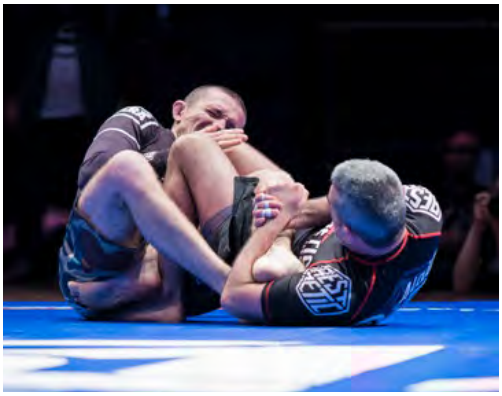
DON'T BECOME ONE-DIMENSIONAL

So, if you took the advice above and did a bunch of intelligent practice, by now you're probably starting to become something of a leg-lock wizard and are enjoying your newfound dominance on the mat. But therein lurks a danger.... over-specialisation. Here's a story to illustrate:

On my travels, I found a great academy where the students all had amazing ashi-garami-to-leg-lock games, modelled off a system used by a famous grappling coach.

They had obviously trained it intensely and were excellent at executing it. I spent my first few classes there tapping a lot. By the third session I had started to figure the style out and how to counter it. It soon became apparent that leg-locks were almost all of their game and that they had over-specialised. Don't let this happen to you.

Until next time - train smart!



NIC GREGORIADES
Nic is Roger Gracie's first black belt student and the founder of the Jiu Jitsu Brotherhood

WORDS: MATT JARDINE
PICTURES: BLANCA MARISA GARCIA

DOJO STORMING & 'CALL OUTS'

"[Martial arts] aim to build character, improve human behaviour and cultivate modesty... They do not, however, guarantee it." - Yasuhiro Konishi

There are dark clouds on the horizon threatening a pernicious tempest that, sadly, we have seen rain on our parades before, many times. Without care, history will repeat itself and once again we will be drowned. If we are to sidestep this malicious maelstrom, we must be honest, open, humble and courageous. But for what battle are we corralling such noble qualities?

THE PEOPLE'S COURT

Nestled between the usual humdrum posts that proliferate social media feeds, one stood out. The style it was written in suggested that some serious life changing tragedy had occurred; a crime that threatened our identities, a travesty of justice against which the masses needed to rise. Someone, somewhere, had deemed to promote one of their grappling students. And the people's court, apparently, did not approve.

Following the story was unsettling. Not because, allegedly, an inauthentic purple belt was teaching and promoting, but because others had become so deeply offended by it. The vehemence of the threads immediately brought the words of the Stoic philosopher, Epictetus, to mind:

"When you are offended at any man's fault, turn to yourself and study your own failings. Then you will forget your own anger."

DÉJÀ VU

Brazilian jiu jitsu prides itself on the uniqueness of its culture, techniques and tactics, and rightly so. Many exponents thumb their noses at the striking arts of the 70's and 80's (namely karate, tae kwon do and the like) and all the division created by association 'in-fighting'.

While it is true that clashes between heightened egos led to derision, fractured groups and subsequent lessening of karate standards, it is not true that BJJ has managed to avoid the same slippery slope. The recent proliferation of 'dojo storming' and social media 'call outs' is evidence of this.

VOICES OF REASON

I caught up with two experienced grapplers to ask them their thoughts on dojo storming: American, Roy Dean, and our very own Oli Geddes.

Dean straddles both camps of traditional martial arts and Brazilian jiu jitsu and is well positioned to provide an enhanced perspective on martial arts etiquette. He has been a live-in student (Uchi deshi) of a Japanese jujutsu and Aikido master as a youngster, and today he is a third-degree black belt in BJJ. We courted Geddes' opinions as he has had direct (albeit unwitting) experience of getting caught in a social media trial and storm.

I asked both black belts their views on dojo storming- the act of either physically visiting or contacting someone's academy or dojo to force them to prove the legitimacy of their BJJ credentials.

"I'm not a fan," said Dean, who is accustomed to the stoic manners of Japanese culture. "It is impolite and ironically, can go quite badly for challengers." Geddes, while believing that BJJ standards need to be consistent, admitted that, "The [BJJ] community as a whole does love to jump in on something with only one view of things."

I asked Oli why he thought some felt the need to 'call out' others for their apparent indiscretions:
"I think people do it because they feel that they have had to put in hours upon hours of hard work to receive their belt. When they see someone else wearing a rank that they feel is undeserved- skipping all the hard work- it cheapens not only the value of their belt but the art as a whole, and that's something they look to deal with."

Self-appointed dojo stormers often justify their actions by arguing that they are protectors of BJJ standards. But do we need their help? If you look around the mats of most BJJ academies you will see a varied demographic represented by high numbers of professionals, parents, students, readers, thinkers; a veritable mix of grown-ups capable of reasonable discretion. More than likely, most of these people would be insulted if they suspected that the 'stormers' doubted their ability to decipher a fraud from a good instructor for themselves.

When I asked Roy if these people were acting selflessly on behalf of the integrity of BJJ, he told me," Quite the opposite. It actually reinforces the worst stereotypes about BJJ guys [girls] being bullies and thugs. A lot of people have done a lot of work to leave that image behind and show jiu jitsu to be the transformational, sophisticated, skill based art that it is."

THE #1 MARTIAL ARTS MYTH

When I went on to ask if BJJ stood above other arts in the eradication of ego, Geddes added,
"One of the biggest lies in jiu jitsu is that it is a martial art without ego. On the one hand, yes, it's hard for a very arrogant person to get through the early stages of being humbled and smashed by people who are smaller and weaker, or just plain better.

"On the other, there is certainly no guarantee that someone who has been training for a long time is going to be without ego. Ego is bad for the art but very common, and something that BJJ was originally all about avoiding, compared to other more traditional martial arts.

"We should remember that, ultimately, the martial art gained prominence as a bunch of guys starting fights with other guys and crushing them to prove the effectiveness of their own art. Is that exactly ego-free? I would say not."

Roy, after being asked the same question said, "It comes down to respect and approaching things with the right intent, whether that's choosing a teacher, taking care of your training partners, or even issuing a challenge.

"I feel a challenge match can be approached

"UNLESS WE KNOW HOW TO PARRY OUR TENDENCIES TO REVERT TO THE ALREADY KNOWN, IT WILL BE CLOSE TO IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH OUR FULL POTENTIAL"

respectfully and used as an honest tool for evaluation of your skill sets. It's not about the challenge, as competition is a natural and healthy instinct, but the intent behind the actions and the way in which you do it.

"I think the more traditional arts encourage a moment of reflection and assessment through their etiquette, which can serve you well in the real world. Passion is great, but knee jerk reactions are not. One extra breath can save you a lot of trouble in the long run."

STEPPING INTO THE EYE OF THE STORM

Every storm has a core, and it is here where we now look at the possible reasons behind the desire to demean others publicly.

According to an article in '*Psychology Today*' we are always making judgments based on the evaluative lenses through which we see the world. For example, "I love that technique that coach just showed us, I'll try and include it in my game," is a judgment based on the student's proclivity for whatever the teacher has demonstrated. It is just as likely that another student watching the same technique, at the same time on the same day, may judge that it is not a move that they enjoy and see including in their BJJ arsenal. The point is, making judgments is natural.

But, as the article goes on to confirm, although judgments are fine and appropriate if they are constructive, they are potentially damaging if they are overly critical and 'judgmental' in an unhelpful way.

PROJECTION

Psychological projection is a theory in psychology in which humans defend themselves against their unconscious qualities by denying their existence in themselves while attributing them to others. During a social media judgmental tirade about another academy, instructor or student, it is often this process of psychological projection at work, and it is this process that makes judgments critical rather than constructive.

CLOUDS WITH A SILVER LINING

No-one is suggesting that misdemeanours in our BJJ community should go unchallenged, but as every parent raising a child through the 1970s has ever said, "Two wrongs don't make a right!" With this in mind, here are some suggestions that could serve the dual purpose of maintaining high and 'charlatan free' standards within our art while simultaneously doing what it is the martial arts claim and aim to do: dissolve our egos.

MENTAL TRAINING

We make gains and improvements in the areas where we place our attention. Three months of armbar defence will lead to fewer sore elbows; a year of consistent competition will result in calmer nerves on the big stage; six years of deep half guard drills will lead to squirrel locking like Oli G!

We all know this, but for some reason, martial artists assume that their minds will develop (and their egos dissolve) by default. They have bought into the myth. It is like preparing for a competition by watching YouTube tutorials and not training. If you want to improve your minds, you need to pay attention to your mind.

HOW BIG IS MY EGO?

When assessing the state of your ego, one useful technique for the mind is to ask yourself, at any given moment, "Right now, how big is my ego?" Before stepping on to the mat before class, "How big is my ego?" When avoiding a roll with 'that' guy or girl in the gym, "How big is my ego?" When chatting in the changing rooms about your latest competition results, "How big is my ego?"

Whatever the answer, critical judgment is unnecessary. The act of honest self-assessment is enough to make positive headway. For example, we only know we need to work on our side escape when honestly admitting that we have lost the last five matches stuck under side control! Courageous acknowledgement of our flaws is half the battle and a catalyst to meaningful change.

By paying attention to the state of our minds on the mats, as well as our techniques, tactics and fitness, martial art training does indeed have the potential to improve the mind, body and emotions. As we become more aware of our frailties, it is easier to be more understanding, compassionate and forgiving of the flaws of others.

TONGLEN TRAINING

9,850 miles from the gritty and arguably egocentric home of Brazilian jiu jitsu lies Tibet, a country that stands in stark contrast to Brazil.

In the monasteries high up in the mountains, an ancient technique could provide what we need to transform dojo storming from an internecine, judgmental and vitriolic witch-hunt, into a practice that is beneficial for the judge, the judged and the BJJ community as a whole. It is the practice of Tonglen.

In short, Tonglen is a meditative visualisation technique whereby the practitioner aims to put themself in the shoes of another person to understand their point of view.

The purpose of Tonglen practice is to step aside from an initial self-centred reaction to the problem and work towards a positive resolution instead. The intent behind the practice is not one of weakness by accepting another's mistakes unquestioningly, but one of strength. Working benevolently toward a solution while simultaneously being mindful of another human being's weaknesses is a sign of high self-confidence and personal power.

CLEAR VIEW

If we are to reach our potential as martial artists and use our training to better not only our skills but also our character, we would be wise to heed one final teaching from the Tibetan Himalayas: clear view thinking.

Historically, it is believed that warrior monk, Bodhidharma, walked from India, through Tibet and on to China, where he founded the Shaolin Temple- the birthplace of modern martial arts.

As well as fighting, he taught Buddhism and the 'Clear View' teachings. The essence of this teaching is that we are all inherently good. Our mind's nature is like the pure blue of a clear sky, clouded only, from time to time, by storm clouds. Through training, we begin to understand the impermanence of the clouds, trusting to wait with patience until they blow away. It is a secular as much as Buddhist ideal and sits at the heart of "building character, improving human behaviour and cultivate modesty"; the aims of most martial artists.

If we work on our minds us much as our bodies, techniques and tactics, then maybe, in the future, we won't see any more public posts condemning others.

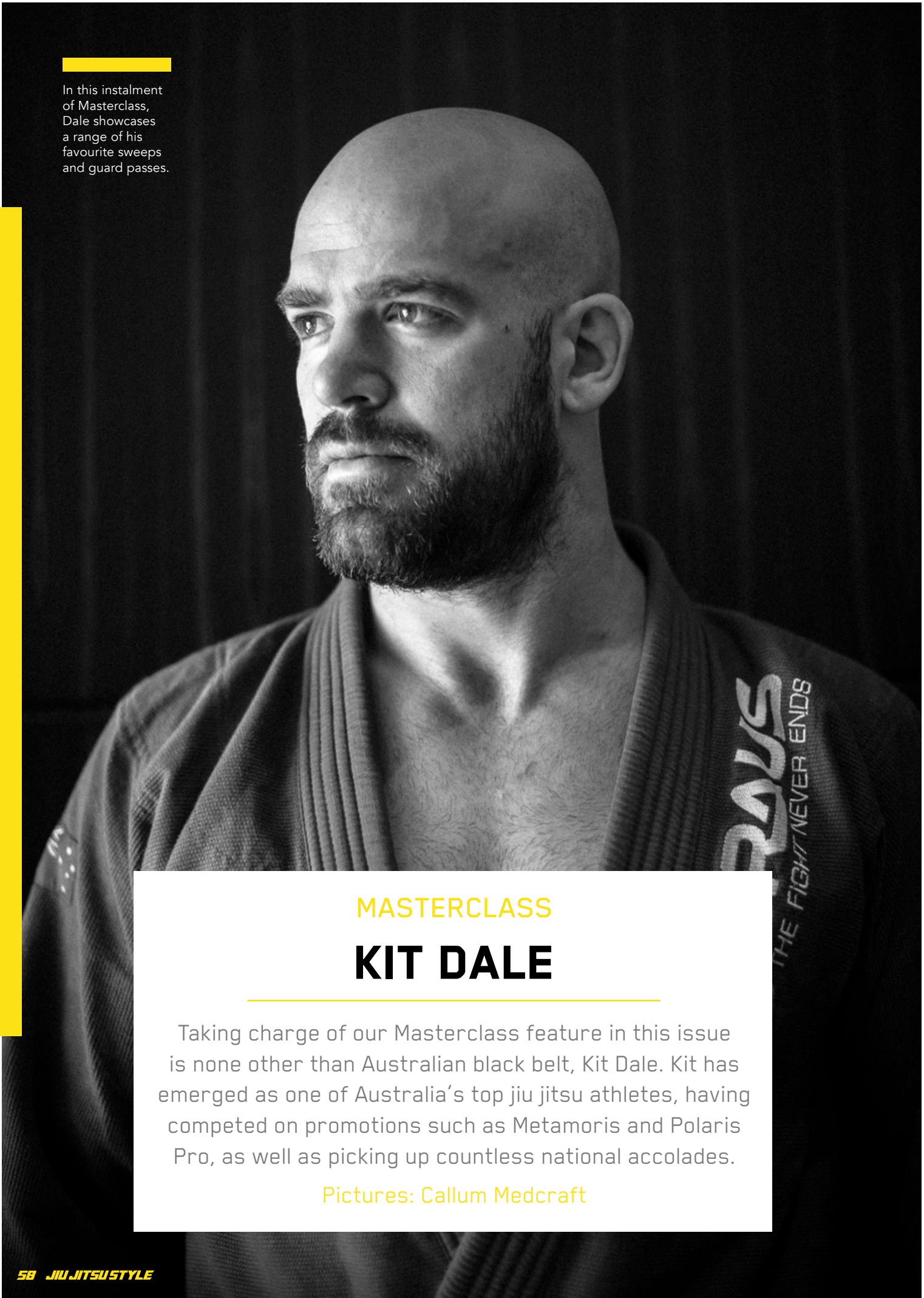
These issues will probably still arise but we'll never know they happened. Perhaps, instead, a highly evolved and caring BJJ exponent will quietly PM the individual concerned and invite them for a coffee to discuss the situation calmly.

The same person might offer their guidance and support, rather than their anger and condemnation. The individual will have used their maturity, class, and benevolence acquired from years and years of martial arts training, to calm a storm before it ever brews.

Now that's a post I wait never to see.

Matt Jardine is an author, writer and teacher of the martial arts. He is more than aware of the irony of an article that judges judging! He is also happy to accept gifts from 'Storm' for inadvertent (or was it?) product placement in the article.

In this instalment of Masterclass, Dale showcases a range of his favourite sweeps and guard passes.



MASTERCLASS

KIT DALE

Taking charge of our Masterclass feature in this issue is none other than Australian black belt, Kit Dale. Kit has emerged as one of Australia's top jiu jitsu athletes, having competed on promotions such as Metamoris and Polaris Pro, as well as picking up countless national accolades.

Pictures: Callum Medcraft

1: Starting from single leg x-guard.

2: Your opponent will always look to clear your foot from their hip. As your left foot is cleared, bring your right leg from underneath your opponent's thigh so that it's now in front of you.

3/4: Bring your right arm underneath your opponent's left leg as they clear your x-guard, so you now arrive in a waiter sweep situation.

5/6/7/8: Lift your hips slightly so you can underhook your opponent's right foot with your left hand. From here, use the momentum from kicking your right leg and extending your hips to arrive on top.

1: Starting from single leg x-guard.

2: Your opponent will always look to clear your foot from their hip. As your left foot is cleared, bring your right leg from underneath your opponent's thigh so that it's now in front of you.

3: Bring your right arm underneath your opponent's left leg as they clear your x-guard, so you now arrive in a waiter sweep situation.

4/5: From this position, if you struggle to sweep you can work to the back. Start by gripping your opponent's belt, while bringing your left shin behind their right thigh.

6: Next, shift your right knee so that it's now behind your opponent's butt.

7/8/9: Extend your legs to create the space needed to bring your head behind your opponent's body. From here, you can attack the back.

1: Your opponent is playing guard, with an active knee shield.

2: Control your opponent's trousers with your right hand.

3/4: Drive your right shoulder forwards to pin their legs down to the mat.

5/6: Your opponent will always look to open their knee upwards to prevent the pass. Time it so that as they open their knee upwards, you bring your chest into the space that was previously occupied by their knee.

7/8: Keep your right arm tight and block your opponent's right leg with your left hand as you progress to pass their guard.

1: Your opponent is playing guard, with an active knee shield.

2/3: Control your opponent's trousers with your right hand as you shift your opponent's knees together via shoulder pressure.

4/5: Window-wipe your right leg to clear your opponent's guard.

6: Increase your pressure by coming up on your toes and placing your head on the mat, driving your opponent's head backwards.

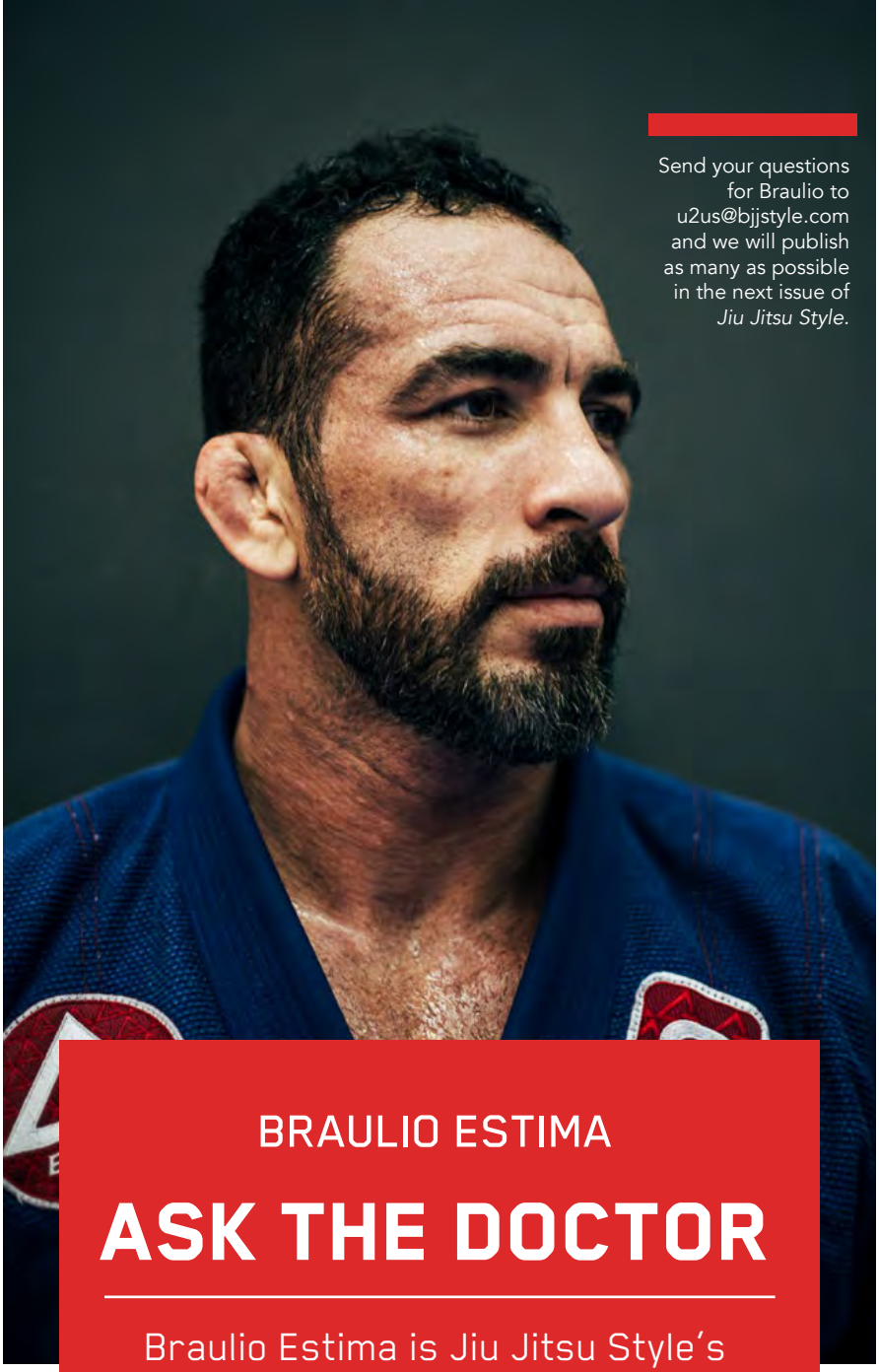
7/8: Because you're driving all your pressure forwards, you will find it easy to lift your legs and shift your body around to the other side of your opponent, passing their guard.

1: Often, when playing butterfly guard, your opponent will do a good job of keeping you on your back as pictured. .

2/3: Bait your opponent into passing by bringing your right leg to the right of their head. From here, they will feel like they can apply pressure to pass.

4/5/6: Just before your opponent can secure the pass, bring your right leg back to its previous position and shoot for the triangle choke.

7/8: This attack is a little risky, as it relies on timing, but it works really well for me, especially when you're dealing with an opponent who's stalling.



Send your questions for Braulio to u2us@bjjstyle.com and we will publish as many as possible in the next issue of *Jiu Jitsu Style*.

BRAULIO ESTIMA

ASK THE DOCTOR

Braulio Estima is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident BJJ Doctor, helping prescribe our readers just the right tonic of tips to improve their grappling game.

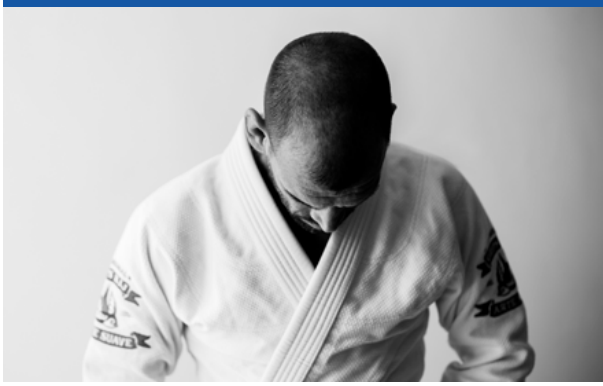
Hi Braulio,
I've recently been promoted to black belt after 11 years of training. I wouldn't say I'm the most athletic guy at the academy, and I'm 35 years old. If I'm being honest, it's becoming increasingly difficult to curb my ego at the gym and adjusting to having a big target on my back. I am constantly under pressure to 'roll hard' with younger, hungry students looking to claim a scalp. Is this something you have had to deal with on a different level as a world champion who everyone would love to tap?

- Peter

Hi Peter,
This is a very interesting question, and one that I think pretty much everyone will deal with at various times during their journey. When you get a new belt there will always be students trying hard to claim your scalp, and this is something I had to deal with as well. On top of that, once you become a teacher and you start to do well at competition, you will find that there's never a day goes by when someone isn't trying to get the better of you in training.

The best advice I can give you is that you MUST remember that it is so important to focus on your personal journey, not on the amount of times you tap in training. Dealing with these pressures and situations where ego can get in the way will ultimately make you better, as long as you continue to train and don't let it stop you from sparring with people.

You don't have to train to prove a point to everyone, so the sooner you gain control of your ego the better. We're all going to tap, we're all going to have those rolls when you're super tired and the guy is really fresh, but don't let the idea of tapping stop you from training. When I got my black belt, I was already a world champion, but I still felt like you did when I started to train with that belt around my waist. Try and view this as another challenge that jiu jitsu will help you face and ultimately improve you as a person.



Hi Braulio,
Have you ever felt like you've suffered from 'jiu jitsu overload' and wanted to take a break from the sport to re-focus? I have been training intensely for three years now, every day, but I really struggle when I don't feel like I'm developing. Do you have any advice to help get through these periods and would it benefit me to take some time off?

- Unknown

I believe that one of the hardest challenges in life is to find that perfect balance; even if you drink too much water, it becomes bad for you. I've tried, as I've gotten older, to listen to my body, so as a result I have an understanding of when I need my body to rest.

As an example: if my plan is to train twice a day from Monday to Friday, but come Wednesday morning my body is exhausted, I'll skip the second session that day in order to recover. Many times, I've taken days off to make sure that I never got to the point where I couldn't bear to be on the mats. It's a very fine line, and only you will be able to address it relative to you. Trying to push through barriers when you feel tired is important, as long as you understand when you genuinely need a rest, otherwise you risk getting jiu jitsu overload, as you say.

I would also say that if I had been training every single day for three years, then I'd be overloaded too! You must allow for vacations and time away to recharge mentally as much as physically. Try to factor in time for stuff like this, but my best advice would also be to listen to your body and have these mini-breaks in your training when you feel you need them.

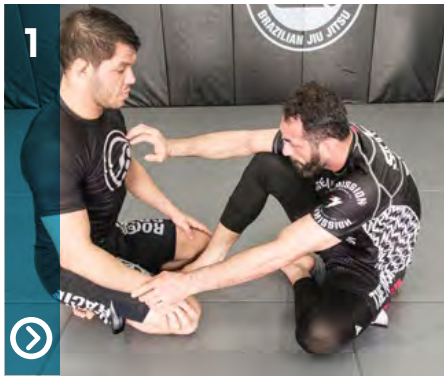
Heel Hook from Butterfly Guard

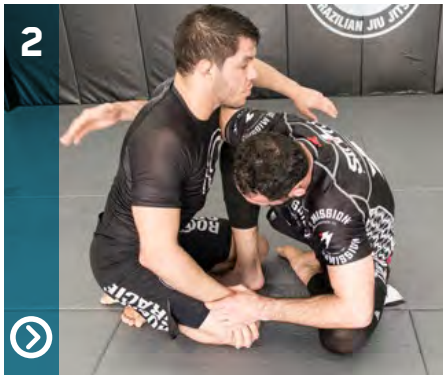
Hi Braulio,
I get to butterfly guard a lot (gi and nogi) but I struggle to have any options past a regular butterfly sweep – any options?

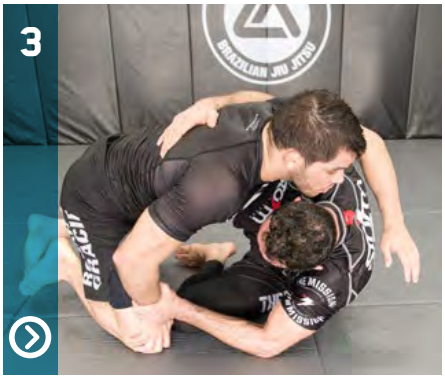
- Pablo

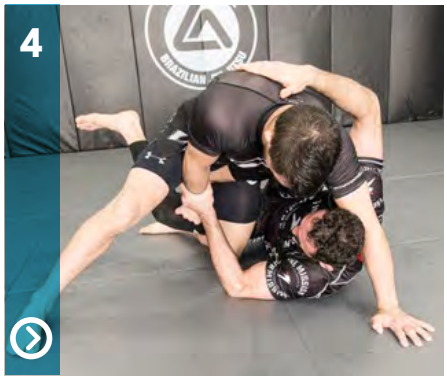
Hi Pablo,
This is a great option (not for IBJJF events) to work on when your opponent bases out well when trying to sweep from butterfly guard. See how it works for you!

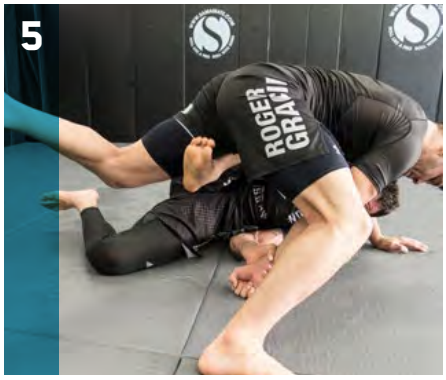
1/2. Starting from butterfly guard, push forwards and get an underhook with your right arm. 3/4. Even when you control your opponent's right wrist and attempt the sweep, they are able to base with their right foot and defend the sweep. 5/6/7. At this point, you circle your left leg outside your opponent's left leg as pictured, locking off a triangle to attack the heel hook. This is a leg reap in IBJJF events, and of course heel hooks are also illegal at those events. 8/9. As you sit backwards to drop your opponent down to the mat, keep their knee secured with both hands. 10/11. Keeping your legs tight, reach backwards and secure the heel hook as pictured.

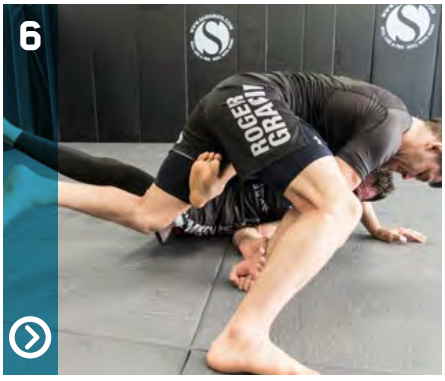


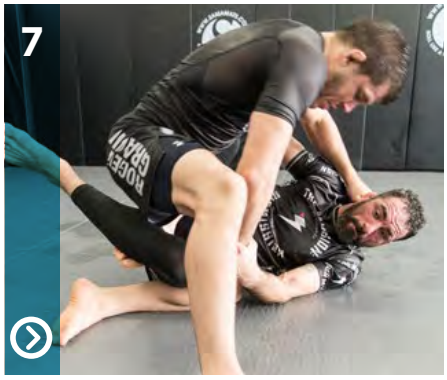


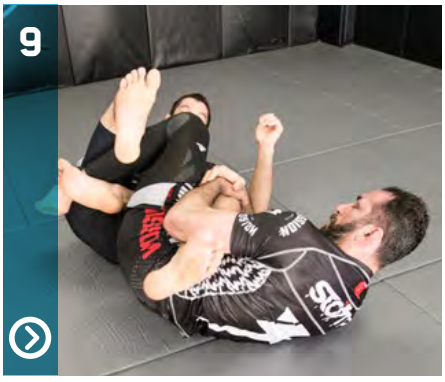


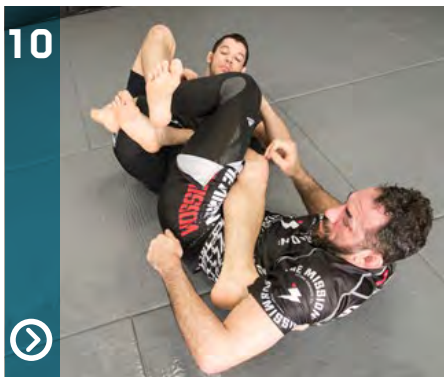


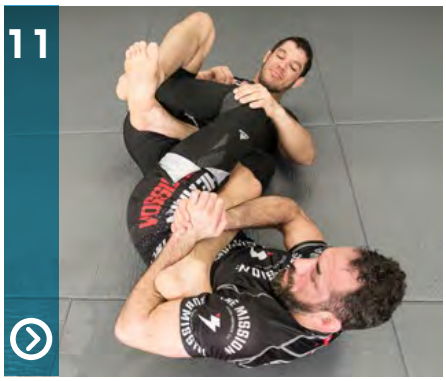












Hi Braulio,
What does a typical grading day look like at your academy, or at Gracie Barra HQ? A lot of guys I know at different gyms do things like the 'Iron Man' or running the gauntlet – do you think these are ok? I wonder if it's really a good thing for the art.

- Monty

Hi Monty,
There are lots of different approaches to grading days. I believe the tradition of belt whipping started as a sort of joke, so maybe not the right mind-set, and that's why at Gracie Barra we don't do that anymore. I feel like they're special days to recognise people for their achievements, not punish them. I also think it can be quite hard to watch a load of guys getting whipped for everyone else at a grading or people who are not on the mat! So yeah, I feel like it started as a joke and it's been made into a tradition for some people, but I don't see it as part of the essence of martial arts.

We have guidelines set out by Gracie Barra for promotions, but these are just guidelines so it doesn't mean someone is guaranteed a belt just because they feel they've served their time. I do enjoy having an annual gathering, where I tend to promote groups of people who were going to be getting new belts within that sort of time frame. These group days do make for special occasions and everyone really enjoys hanging out and reflecting on a year of training. It's not that I don't give out belts throughout the rest of the year, but we try to group as many as possible to be given out on our annual gathering.

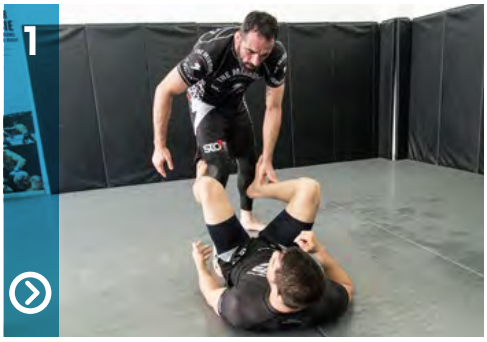
We also make sure that anyone who receives a black belt has to do a speech, where they can talk about their own journey and what made them a black belt. I think this acts as a great way for the next black belts to express themselves and also motivate the other students to keep on the journey.

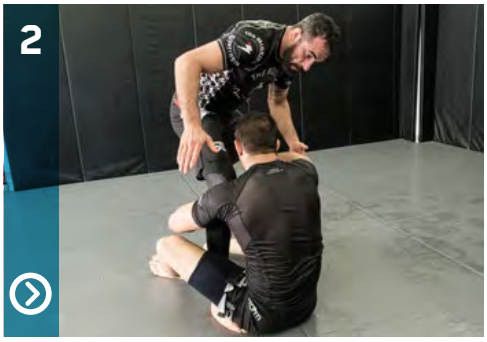
Rolling Darce Choke

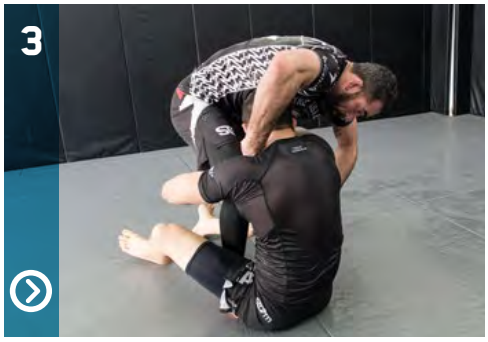
Hi Braulio,
I love Darce chokes and different head and arm chokes, so I wanted to see if you had any favourite set ups you like to use?

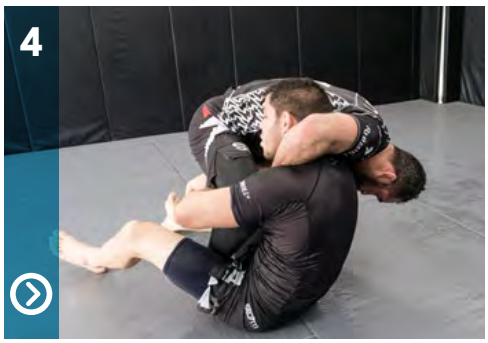
- Hasan

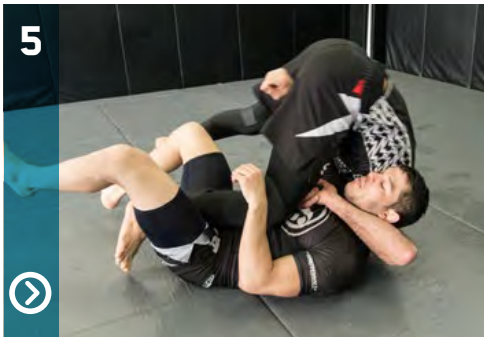
Hi Hasan,
This is a nice little set up to play with, and it looks pretty awesome if you pull it off!

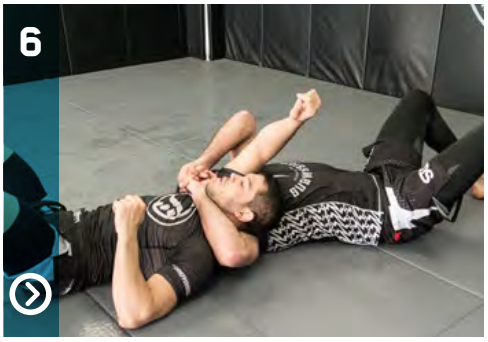


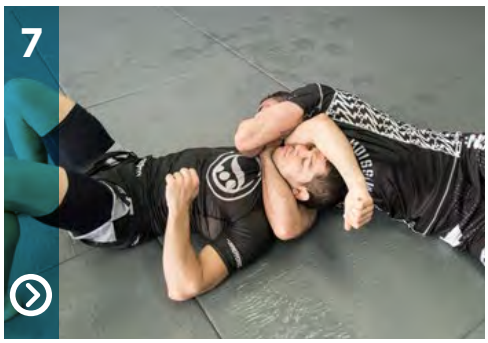




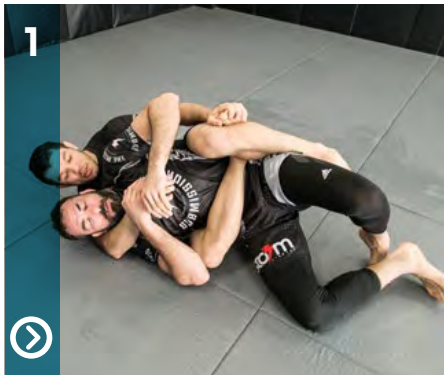


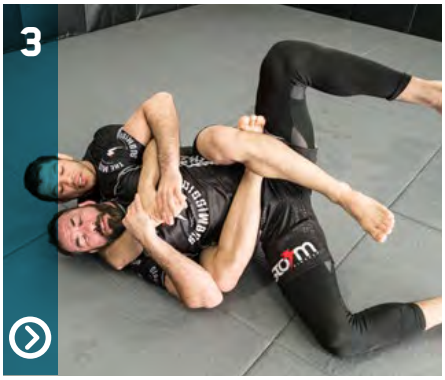


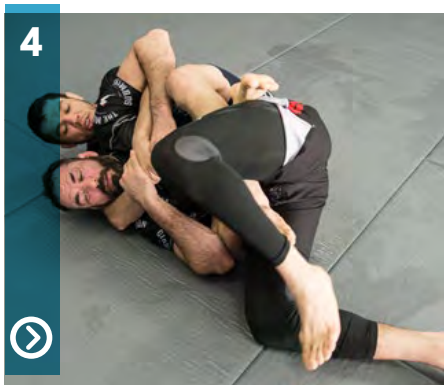


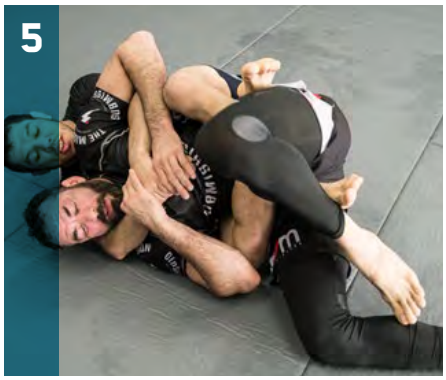


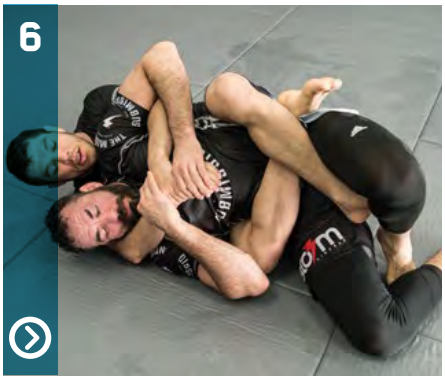
1/2. Your opponent is on their back, playing guard, and starts to sit up, attempting to control your leg. 3/4/5. Straight away, secure a sort of arm-in guillotine grip around your opponent's neck, as you dive forward and over your shoulder to clear their legs. 6/7/8. Turn towards your left, adjusting your hands slightly to lock-off a sort of choking grip as pictured. Keep moving your legs towards your opponent as you squeeze to get the tap. Ideally, you'd jump back into half guard and control their legs to prevent them from escaping away from you.

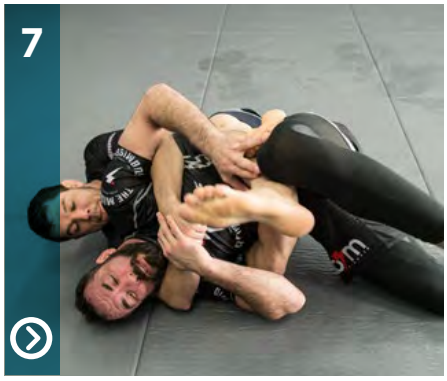


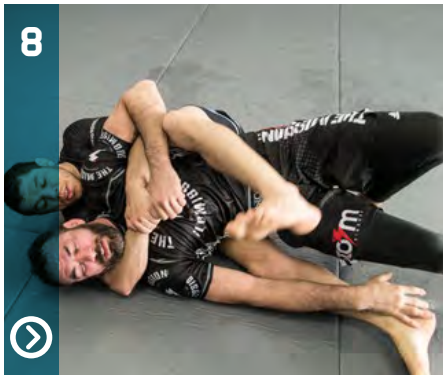


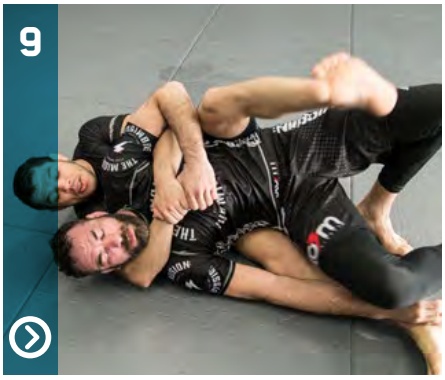


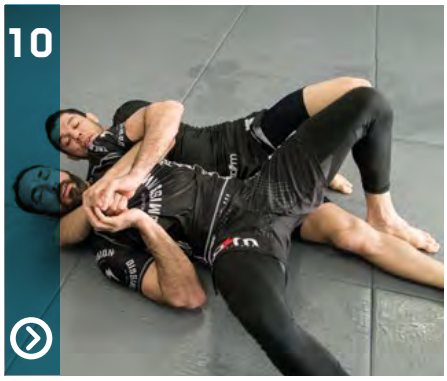


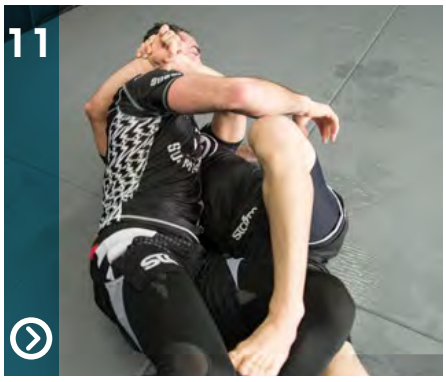












Body Triangle Escape

Hey Braulio,
I struggle to break out of a body triangle. Do you have any tips to deal with this position?

- Casper

Hi Casper,
This can be really tricky to deal with, especially when you have someone with long legs who is reluctant to leave the position at any cost. That said, this option works well for me.

1. Your opponent is on your back with a solid body triangle. They've got to the ideal position, with their triangle on the opposite side to that which is in contact with the mat. 2/3/4. First off, start by straightening your left leg, circling it backwards and over the top of your opponent's leg. 5/6. From here, you can catch your opponent's angle with your own foot as pictured and start to apply pressure to the joint by dragging your leg backwards. 7/8/9/10/11. The pressure on your opponent's ankle will force them to re-adjust their body triangle. You must catch them at the moment they attempt to open their legs and control the hooks, before starting to snake your hips towards the mat and escaping the position.

JUDO SPECIAL

SALLY CONWAY

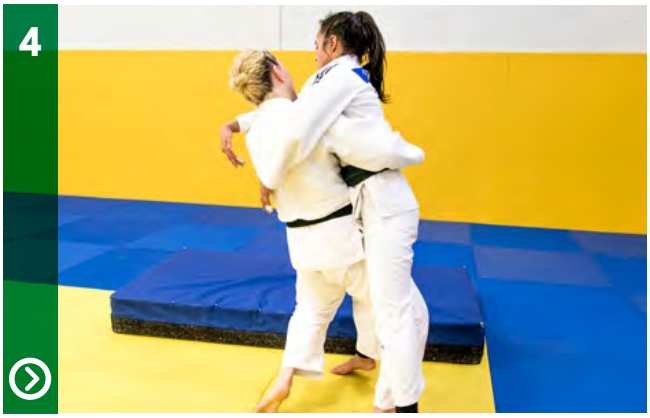
For this issue, we've brought you none other than Olympic judo bronze medallist, Sally Conway! Having made her Olympic debut in London 2012, Sally went on to secure bronze at the Rio games last summer.

Portrait: Andy Douglas

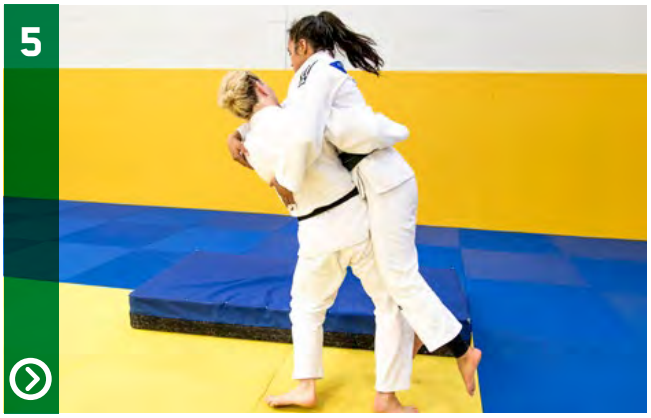
In this issue, Sally showcases two takedowns, as well as a unique armlock on the ground.

1: Starting in front of your opponent.

2/3: Fake like you're going for a collar grip before shooting in around your opponent's waist.



4/5: Starting lower than your opponent will make it easier to pick them up with your hips, keeping your arms tight around their waist.



6/7/8: Whip your whole body down to the right. In judo, I'd follow through by rolling, but make sure to throw with control so you don't end up being reversed and end up on the bottom.

1: Starting with regular grips, controlling your opponent's right sleeve and left lapel.

2: Step to the left, as you start to circle to your opponent's right.

3/4: Pull your opponent towards you with your grips as you plant your foot on their hip.

4: From here, you can create a little space by pushing your opponent away with your left arm.

5/6: As your back hits the floor, start to extend your right leg as you keep pulling on your grips.

7/8: Make sure to keep hold of your grips as your opponent hits the mat so you can come on top quickly.

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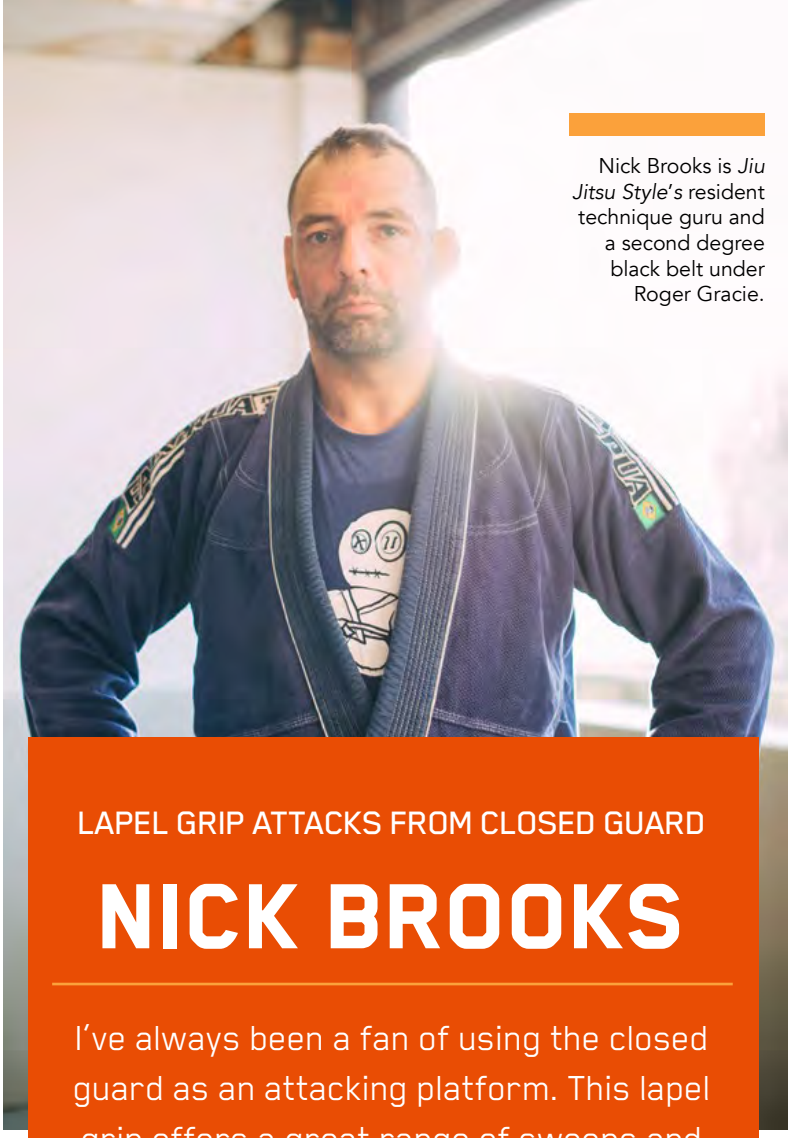
1: Your opponent is in turtle, so start by sneaking your right hand through to control their forearm as pictured.

2: Grip your opponent's left foot with your left hand.

3/4: Drive your left knee in between their right knee and arm. At the same time, drive your weight across your opponent's back to flatten them out, but make sure you keep control of their right forearm

5/6: Bring your left hand into play so you have two hands on one of your opponent's.

7/8: Switch your base so you're sitting right over your opponent and can finish with the armlock.



Nick Brooks is *Jiu Jitsu Style*'s resident technique guru and a second degree black belt under Roger Gracie.

LAPEL GRIP ATTACKS FROM CLOSED GUARD

NICK BROOKS

I've always been a fan of using the closed guard as an attacking platform. This lapel grip offers a great range of sweeps and submissions; offering some fresh options from the traditional guard.

1/2: Grip both your opponent's lapels and open them from their belt.

3/4: Pull your opponent towards you and at the same time reach underneath their left leg and switch your grip as pictured.

5: Control their right sleeve with your left hand.

6: Open your guard and place your left foot on the floor.

7/8/9: As you open your guard, turn your body and kick your right leg high into your opponent's armpit to off-balance them. Maintain your grips and roll into the mount position.

1: Grip both your opponent's lapels and open them from their belt.

2/3: Pull your opponent towards you and at the same time reach underneath their left leg and switch your grip as pictured.

4: You notice your opponent is leaning back on their heels, which opens up the possibility to sweep them backwards.

5/6: In a quick motion, shoot your left leg over your opponent's right shoulder, turning to your knees.

7/8: Once you arrive on top, continue to maintain your grips and drive your weight into your opponent's chest to secure the position.

SWEEP TO TRIANGLE

1/2: Grip both your opponent's lapels and open them from their belt.

3/4: Pull your opponent towards you and at the same time reach underneath their left leg and switch your grip as pictured.

5: Secure a cross-grip with your left hand.

6: Open your guard and place your left foot on the floor.

7/8: As you open your guard, turn your body and kick your right leg high into your opponent's armpit to off-balance them.

9/10/11/12: Your opponent will place their hand on the mat to prevent the sweep. As they do, it gives you a chance to shoot for a triangle as pictured.

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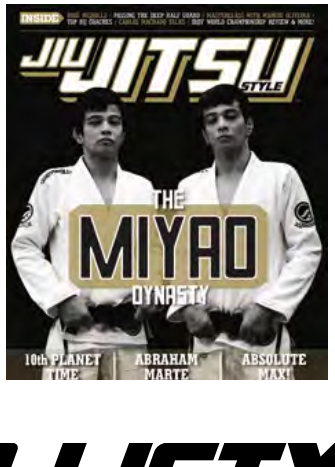

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REVIEW CORNER

STORM LIMITED EDITION 1996 KIMONO

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.STORMKIMONOS.COM FOR $229.99

Storm Kimonos have really excelled themselves with the launch of their limited edition '1996' kimono, which is easily one of the best gis we've ever worn.

Everything about this product screams excellence: the branding, the quality of the materials used, the colours, and the extremely exclusive production run (rumour has it that only 300 were made).

The product features a number of Storm exclusive innovations, including Zero Hold Sleeve Technology® to prevent opponents getting a strong grip and Storm Breathe Tec fabric® to help keep you cool. The main jacket is also made from premium 550gsm Japanese weave fabric, making this an absolute tank of a gi.

The indigo kimono is offset beautifully by gold and red detailing, with the Storm wording on the lower back section of the jacket really standing out for us. The font is gorgeous, the placement is bold, and it's just an exceptionally unique looking gi. The Storm website states that the jacket is constructed using 'five panel responsive structure'. Now, we're not too sure what this means, but the detailed stitching and overall feel of the product seems legit to us! You'll be happy to know that the comfort and rolling performance live up to expectations as well, with no signs of wear after a solid six weeks of testing.

The A2 pants fit our 5ft 8in reviewer perfectly, sitting right on the anklebone after numerous washes. Just like the jacket, they feel indestructible, and the subtle Storm lightning bolt on the back of the left calf section is a really nice touch.

Ok, so this is a pricey gi, but it's also an extremely rare, limited edition gi – one that we can't help but get out of the bag every hour or so just to look at. With further innovations coming with their future kimono offerings, we are really excited to see what Storm come up with next.

PERSONALISED, PREMIUM BJJ BELTS

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.THEGRAPPLERSGIFT.BIGCARTEL.COM FOR £55

Grapplers Gift have teamed up with Progress Jiu Jitsu, and together they are offering an amazing belt personalisation service for the BJJ community.

Custom belts are the perfect gift for jiu jitsu enthusiasts: if you or a friend have recently been promoted, what better way to celebrate this achievement than with an awesome new belt? This service offers great levels of customisation, with a huge variety of fonts and colours available. Customers are also able to include logos and simple designs on the belts, but Grapplers Gift will need to 'ok' these before going into production.

The ordering process is very simple: upon placing your belt order, Grapplers Gift will respond within 24 hours to go through your customisation requirements. We found this personal line of communication over email preferable to entering details via a website form, where key details can often be misinterpreted.

Once our order was completed, the belt arrived with us in around two weeks, which is very reasonable considering the product is customised. The belt arrives in a swanky black box, cushioned by black paper. These high-end touches really made opening our package an awesome experience on its own, and further confirms that these belts would make great gifts for friends.

The belt itself also doesn't disappoint: the embroidery is stitched in flawlessly, and our exotic choice of font (Big Noodle Titling) looks amazing in gold. As expected of Progress Jiu Jitsu products, it's a premium belt, so you can expect it to stay in excellent shape for many years on the mat.

Coming in at £55, which includes UK delivery, this really is an excellent product, with unrivalled levels of customer service from Grapplers Gift during the whole process. Two huge thumbs-up from us.

MEDIPEN CANNABINOID VAPORIZER

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.MEDIPEN.CO FROM £49.97

MediPen have pushed the envelope of legal cannabinoids in the UK, launching the first CBD vaporizer available on the market.

Despite government resistance to fully legalise all forms of cannabis (or, in some cases, even recognise its medicinal benefits), CBD oil has become a highly sought after compound in recent years, taking the natural product industry by storm.

First things first: the CBD oil consumed via MediPen vaporizers in non-psychoactive. It is CBD's brother compound, THC, which is responsible for the traditional marijuana high. With only trace elements of THC present in MediPen products, it's not going to take you to cloud 9. So, if it's not getting you high, are there real benefits from using CBD products? In short, lots.

Recent cannabis research has identified CBD as the component responsible for a great deal of marijuana's medical benefits.

Consuming CBD products has been proved to help with:

- Relieving pain and inflammation
- Inducing antipsychotic effects
- Reducing anxiety
- Relieving nausea
- Treating seizures and neurological disorders
- Lowering risk of diabetes
- Aiding athletic recovery
- Helping to fight cancer

The last point is well worth stressing, as several scientific reports demonstrate that CBD benefits include possessing antiproliferative, pro-apoptotic effects that inhibit cancer cell migration, adhesion and invasion.

As Nick Diaz famously stressed in a recent post-fight press conference (while honking on his CBD pipe), cannabinoids' anti-inflammatory benefits make the products great additions to an athlete's recovery process, with more innovations being made in this area every day.

The MediPen vaporizer is like no cannabinoid product we've ever seen. The design is slick, stylish and discrete; a far cry from the usual cannabinoid products you'd expect to find when walking down a dodgy road in Amsterdam. The £49.97 starter kit includes a vaporizer, one cartridge and a battery charger. We tested three different flavours: odourless, coconut and vanilla, with coconut being our clear favourite.

Using the vaporizer was actually really enjoyable. Though you do feel a heightened sense of relaxation while using the product, most of the benefits of CBD are quite hard to quantify, much like eating your spinach.

For us, MediPen's vaporizer is an innovative step in the right direction as a product that champions the benefit of cannabinoids. For anyone interested learning more about CBD oil and cannabis products, we'd recommend checking out MediPen's website as a great starting point.

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GI SPOTLIGHT | ADIDAS CONTEST 2.0 KIMONO

OVERVIEW

Adidas have returned with the second version of their premium kimono, Contest 2.0, and it's pretty damn impressive. Though Adidas fans will always be drawn to the iconic branding, this gi offers far more than just aesthetic appeal.

THE JACKET

The jacket is made from 450gsm cotton, with eye-catching contrast white stitching on our black sample gi. The trademark Adidas three stripes are located on both shoulders, but unlike the first version of the Contest, the stripes do not run all the way down the sleeves. This is an important change, as the previous version of the kimono was not IBJJF legal. The main Adidas logo is also located on the left chest of the jacket; design is simple, yet stylish in the way you'd expect of Adidas products. The inside neckline features a camouflage design on rashguard style material, a feature becoming more and more common with kimonos nowadays.

Our A2 sample was slightly roomy straight out of the bag, but after one wash – and with minimal shrinkage – it became a near perfect fit in both the body and sleeves. For anyone harbouring fears that this will fit like one of Adidas' early judo kimonos, don't. The cut and style of the jacket is awesome, fitting in all the right areas and leaving no excess material to grab.

TROUSERS

The trousers are constructed of 280 gsm, 100% pre-shrunk cotton, and also feature white contrast stitching, just like the jacket. The drawstring around the waistline is secured by six loopholes - three on each side – and does a great job at keeping you comfy while rolling.

DETAILS

One of the best details about this product is the silky-smooth cuff tape used on the sleeves and trousers. Some high-end kimonos neglect this part of the design process, often using irritable, scratchy tape on the areas that are often in contact with your skin. With the Contest 2.0, you gain an extra level of comfort around your wrists and ankles thanks to the smooth cuff tape.

SUMMARY

Adidas continue to up their game when it comes to their range of jiu jitsu gear, and the Contest 2.0 is easily their best offering to date. At £84.99, this is tied as the most expensive gi they make, but you get so much value for that price point that it's sure to be a hit with both the liberal and thrifty grapplers. Available in white, blue and black.

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ANDY MARSHALL

ANDY MARSHALL is the owner of *Villain Strength* and a strength and conditioning expert. He has worked with notable professional athletes including heavyweight boxing contender, Dillian Whyte, and British grappling standout, Dan Strauss.

FIT TO FIGHT | CREATING A RESULTS BASED TRAINING PROGRAM

WHAT ORDER SHOULD THE EXERCISES BE IN?

After your dynamic warm ups, the first exercises in the workout should be the ones that requires you to put in the most effort and give you the most "bang for your buck".

For example, if your goal is to build overall strength, then begin one workout with a squat and another with a deadlift; just make sure they are far enough apart in the week to be able to recover (since these are the toughest workouts to recover from). If you do deadlifts on Monday then do squats on Friday. On Wednesday, you can start with an upper body exercises.

If you choose to do any power exercises or plyo's, such as box jumps, med ball throws, sprints, etc., these can be fitted in after your dynamic warm-ups and before your big strength exercises.

HOW SHOULD I STRUCTURE THE SETS AND REPS IN MY WORKOUT?

This will not be a course on the science behind rep ranges, but rather a recommendation for what works well if you're looking to consistently get your body to be stronger and more muscular (leaner too, but that is something that has a lot to do with nutrition, which I'll mention later) and what has worked with clients.

Most people do well with a mix of heavy (strength), medium (muscle size) and lighter (muscular endurance/metabolic damage) weights. This calls for a combo of:

Low Rep: 3-6 reps
Moderate Rep: 7-12 reps
High Rep: 13-20+ reps

Your sets should be inversely related to the number of reps you're doing per set. For example:

15 reps: 1 to 2 sets
10-12 reps: 2 to 3 sets
8 reps: 3 to 4 sets
3-4 reps: 5 to 6 sets

This is not set in stone of course, but it gives you a great foundation to work with. These are not magic numbers; you may see better results with more or less volume – depending on lifestyle, work, nutrition, recovery capabilities, experience, etc.

HOW DO I MAKE SURE I KEEP PROGRESSING? (THE GOAL WILL DETERMINE THIS)

We'll keep the goal emphasis here to two different priorities – strength and size

STRENGTH

Here the emphasis should be to increase the weight on your main exercises. Let's say you're doing 4 sets of 4 reps on a trap bar deadlift and in week one you do 110kg, in the second week you'd push it and go up to 115 kg.

As you can imagine, you can continue like that for weeks or maybe a couple of months before you plateau and your strength gains become smaller than the weight increments you can add. So, to add weight to the bar we have to lower the reps.

Instead of the 4 x 4 you just did, you could do 2 x 3, and 2 x 2 (so you're still hitting 4 sets but you're lowering the reps and upping the weight). You could also do 6 x 2 while increasing weight each set and hitting your heaviest for the last two sets. As you can see there are many options, but the main thing is that in some way you keep adding weight to the bar.

SIZE

When you get stronger, muscles grow bigger. This makes sense but, as we saw in the "Strength" portion, it's not that simple, especially when we

add quite a bit of strength. Muscles also grow when you make them do more work (volume), which can happen by adding a rep or two to a set or even adding a set (or later two) to the exercise.

Let's say you're doing a bench press and you're doing 3 sets of 8 reps. In the first weeks you'll most likely be adding weight to the bar, but once that starts slowing down and you feel like you are at a plateau – push to get an extra rep or two – so you'd push for 9 or 10 reps in the last couple of sets. You could also add a 4th set to get extra volume, create more total work for the muscles, which gives you the potential to grow some more.

The key is to overload the muscles progressively so that your body adapts and adds strength and size.

HOW DO I KEEP MY PROGRAM "FRESH TO DEATH" AND NEVER STALE?

It's happened to everyone. Your workouts get stale and boring if you don't re-program every 4-6 weeks. Not only will they get boring but you'll also see your results start stalling as well.

Here are some ways to keep them challenging:

1. Change the exercises within the category. I have suggested a bunch of progressions to choose from, but an example would be going from a DB row to a T-bar row. Switch a trap bar deadlift to a rack pull deadlift. Go from chin-ups to pull-ups.

2. Change the order of the exercises, sets and reps. So, if you were doing 3 sets of 15 for your last exercise, make it your first exercise and use heavier weights for 4 sets of 6 reps (for instance).

3. Use different tension techniques from eccentric sets, tempo training, pause, 1 and ½ reps, etc.

4. A combination of the above. Whichever strategy tickles your fancy, I recommend you do a de-load (which just means a week of training at a lower intensity, backing off and giving your body a break – but it doesn't mean not doing anything) between programs (every 6-8 weeks is a good idea, depending on the program).

To reiterate, on the "de-load" week you use fewer sets, lighter weight or even add in more of the warm up exercises in between your training. This is very important if you feel beat up and run down and it can also boost your results as it gives the body a chance to recover.

WORDS: GAVIN ALLINSON

WHAT IS THE KETOGENIC DIET?

The ketogenic diet is an ultra low carb style of eating that has been used for centuries and has regained popularity over recent years.

When your body is in a ketogenic state, it burns fat for fuel instead of relying on glucose from carbohydrate or stored glycogen. The therapeutic effects of the ketogenic diet have been known for centuries and it was used to treat epileptic seizures and Type 1 diabetes before insulin was discovered. Now, a growing range of enlightened doctors and nutritional therapists are using it to reverse Type 2 diabetes.

In 1863, William Banting's book was the first diet book to be published and it promoted a ketogenic approach. In the 60s, *The Drinking Man's Diet* book sold over 2.4 million copies (ketogenic diet combined with low carb alcoholic drinks - vodka, gin, whisky and brandy are ok). Then came the Atkins diet, first published in 1972, which was a runaway hit for 20 years.

WHY KETO IS BACK IN VOGUE, THE RISE OF THE BIOHACKER AND THE JOE ROGAN EFFECT

Over the last five years, it's been pretty trendy to call yourself a 'Biohacker' - they are motivated, geeky individuals who love experimenting with diet, training and supplements to help improve performance - we are talking Tim Ferriss, Dave Asprey (butter and MCTs in coffee), Ben Greenfield (endurance events fuelled on fat) and Joe Rogan, the UFC commentator.

These guys have looked at and experimented with the ketogenic diet and, as a result, have identified numerous performance benefits:

BENEFITS OF A KETOGENIC DIET

APPETITE SUPPRESSION
STABLE ENERGY LEVELS
FAT LOSS
INCREASED STRENGTH
IMPROVED MOOD
ENHANCED FOCUS
BETTER SLEEP
MUSCLE PRESERVATION
CLEARER SKIN
IMPROVED LONGEVITY

When you look at that list, everybody would want at least one of those benefits, so why isn't everybody following the ketogenic diet? We'll cover some of the reasons, but first we need to look at how we get into the state of ketosis (having elevated blood ketone levels).

KETOGENIC DIET AND FASTING

Fasting is a natural state. Our ancestors would have gone for long periods between meals, particularly before we started farming. Under these circumstances the body needed to function without the energy provided by carbohydrates.

In times of low food availability our body breaks down muscle protein to create glucose (we don't want to lose muscle) and this is a reason why low fat diets can end up causing as much as 50% of the weight loss to be lean muscle. The other way the body produces energy is by breaking down fat and converting that fat into an alternative energy source: ketones.

WHAT ARE KETONES?

They were first discovered in 1921 and there are three types that the body produces:

- Acetone (can give your breath a fruity smell)
- Acetoacetate
- Beta-Hydroxy Butyrate (BHB)

When your body is running on ketones it is analogous to a hybrid car running on a dual fuel supply. Typically, in the modern age, with so many of our meals based around carbohydrates, we very rarely get into a position where our body is producing ketones naturally. So, our engine never really becomes efficient at using fat as a fuel source.

HOW WE GET INTO A STATE OF KETOSIS AND START PRODUCING KETONES

Essentially, the ketogenic diet relies on restriction of dietary carbohydrate to 20-30g of carbs in total a day - that's only 4 to 6 teaspoons of sugar, or a handful of rice, or half a sweet potato.

When we do restrict carbs, over a period of a few days the body exhausts any glycogen (stored carbohydrate in the muscle and the liver) with the average body having about 2000 kcals of glycogen stored. Once that is gone, we start utilising dietary fat for fuel, and also body fat, if we are eating fewer calories than we need.

If you are trying to lose body fat remember that you still need to be eating less than your daily requirements, even if you are following a keto plan; it is not a magic bullet. You can still put on weight on a ketogenic diet if you eat too much. Often

people find the higher amounts of fat very filling, so this makes it easier to stick to as you are not suffering too badly with food cravings.

WHAT DOES FOOD FOR A DAY LOOK LIKE ON A KETO DIET?

WAKE UP
DRINK WATER

DURING THE MORNING
2 CUPS OF TEA OR COFFEE WITH ADDED MCT POWDER

FIRST MEAL 12-2 PM
3-4 EGGS
150G MUSHROOMS / SALT
15G BUTTER
200G SPINACH
1 AVOCADO

SECOND MEAL 6-8 PM
200G STEAK /10G BUTTER
200G CABBAGE / 15G COCONUT OIL / SALT
SPICES OF YOUR CHOICE
½ AVOCADO

KEY NUTRITIONAL POINTS OF THIS PLAN

1. Intermittent fasting
The above approach uses a technique called intermittent fasting, which means that you eat during an 8-hour period from noon to 8 pm and then fast for 16 hours (for 8 of the 16 hours you are not eating you are asleep, so it's not as bad as it seems). You don't have to use intermittent fasting and keto together; either can be used independently of the other and you can make the eating window smaller.

Fasting has numerous biochemical and cellular advantages. Our cells undergo a process called autophagy, with the cells breaking down any cellular debris and poor performing components (like the mitochondria - batteries of the cells that produce energy) and then using the raw materials to create newer versions of themselves. This imparts the anti-ageing and recovery benefits associated with fasting.

2. Eating two bigger meals and not multiple feeds
This might be hard for many to contemplate because you are used to eating carbs, which give you quick bursts of energy but leave you feeling hungry again with an hour, or sometimes even sleepy because of the insulin that your body has released. The high fat nature of the ketogenic diet helps to keep you feeling full for longer periods of time than a higher carb approach.

3. Drinking plenty of water and adding extra salt
A ketogenic diet can cause you to dehydrate, so it is advisable to drink plenty of water - more than the 2 litres per day - so aim for 4 to 6 litres and add additional salt to your food. If you are trying a keto style diet and you feel 'rough' during the first few days you may have 'keto flu' due to a lack of salt. If this happens then make up a shot glass with ¼ to ½ teaspoon of salt in it and drink it.

4: Ultra low carbs
We are looking to keep carb levels in the 20g to 30g range per day, so that our body can use fats for fuel and not carbs and muscle tissue.

Avocados are full of healthy fats and butter/ghee and coconut oil are all good too. Go easy on nuts and seeds as the carbs in them can start to add up.

HOW DOES THE KETO DIET FIT WITH BJJ?
Most BJJ competitors will have experimented with a ketogenic diet at some point in time, even if they weren't aware of it. Trying to cut 3-5 kg in the last 7 days before a competition will more than likely shift you into ketosis. We hear how the MMA fighters drop +10 kg and think that it will be easy to do 3-5 kg before a BJJ comp; it's often disastrous and can put people off trying a low carb approach and combining it with competing.

What do we often do? We cut the carbs and really reduce our food intake to drop weight quickly (and dehydrate). This will invariably shift us into a ketogenic state. The competitor often tries to carry out intensive training in the lead up to a competition and then STRUGGLES. It takes time to become 'fat adapted', i.e. getting your body switched on to burning fat for fuel rather than utilising carbs as an energy source, as you have been doing for the last 20-30 years...

Often this causes BJJ practitioners to say that 'keto' didn't work for them, or they felt 'weak on it'. Yes, this will probably happen if you don't give it long enough.

I've spoken to numerous competitors over the years who could easily drop 3-5 kg of excess body fat and fight in the weight class lower than their current one. They say they tried losing weight once, but felt that they had no energy and were weaker, so were going to stay at the higher, 'fat weight'. Maybe it's an excuse to not lose weight, but if you try and lose 8 kg in the week of an event and have no time to rehydrate and replenish before you fight, yes. you will perform badly.

A word of warning - if you're going to try the ketogenic diet, give yourself plenty of time and do it when you have no competitions looming so you are not putting yourself under any undue pressure.

There are numerous benefits when using the keto approach that are valuable to martial artists:

- Keto is anti-inflammatory so you'll recover from aches, pains and strains faster.
- It's mood enhancing so you'll feel more inclined to 'go train' even when you've been smashed the day before.
- Your strength will often improve, as will your cardio.
- Not as relevant for BJJ, but for those of you that dabble with MMA, ketones can protect against head injury, trauma and concussions.
- You'll also experience increased mental clarity when you are on the mats, which will lead to making better decisions when rolling.

No guarantees that you'll be like Neo from the Matrix but.....

All of these are big claims I know, and they may not work for everyone, but I've seen enough to recommend that the majority of people give it a good go for a month or two.

FUELLING HIGH INTENSITY MOVEMENTS FOR HIGH LEVEL ATHLETES
BJJ is a sport where you need explosive power as well as endurance. The body can run on fats at lower intensities, but for higher intensities you need glycogen in the muscles. This is one area that some sports scientists use against the ketogenic approach for high-end sport. If you have restricted carbs too heavily before a fight, without being conditioned to burn fat for fuel, then you will probably have a loss of power.

METABOLIC CHANGES TAKE TIME
Most reported scientific studies use quite a short window for fat adaptation. A recent study of race walkers used a three-week fat adaptation phase and they found that those in the high fat / low carb group did worse. All was doom and gloom for the keto community...however, two of the people in the high fat group smashed their personal bests and posted national records three weeks after the study concluded, when they added carbs back into their diet.

So, I think there is a place for high level competitors to introduce carbs around specific sessions and is something to be experimented with on an individual basis. This is cutting edge practice, but there are a growing number of practitioners adopting keto probably more as a LIFESTYLE

"OUR ANCESTORS WOULD HAVE GONE FOR LONG PERIODS BETWEEN MEALS, PARTICULARLY BEFORE WE STARTED FARMING. THE BODY NEEDED TO FUNCTION WITHOUT THE ENERGY PROVIDED BY CARBOHYDRATES"

choice rather than as a PERFORMANCE strategy, together with a growing band of competitors.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH KETO

I came across a keto style of eating over 20 years ago when I used the Atkins diet to strip about 10 kg of fat after I stopped playing rugby. This was well before I was a nutritionist and I ate cheese and bacon, sugar-free jelly and double cream. I wasn't eating too many veggies or avocados back then, and coconut oil was not even a 'thing'.

I dabbled with it a bit when I created an online fat loss plan with Matt Lovell, but tended to use higher carbs (approx 60-100g per day) rather than strict keto (20-30g per day). About five years ago we had an endurance seminar where a speaker talked about fat adaption and how he was running 100km races on a couple of tins of sardines. That opened my eyes a lot to the potential...

Around three years ago, a client who became a good friend of mine started telling me how he had stripped fat, was lifting more and felt fantastic on the keto diet, but I resisted his attempts to try and 'convert me'.

Then, a family member was diagnosed with cancer and I investigated nutritional strategies and the ketogenic diet popped up. I watched *Ted Talks* by Dr Dom D'Agostino and William Li. I heard Joe Rogan and Tim Ferriss talking about the ketogenic diet and exogenous ketones on their podcasts, and a year or so later an Aussie strength and movement coach I follow online started talking about the exogenous ketones; it was then that I decided to try them myself.

Within 10 minutes of my first sachet I felt a big surge in energy; so much so that I had to go and train, so hopped on my bike and smashed out some sprints. I got on the phone to my friend and told him that I now knew what he was talking about in terms of the benefits of keto. I was feeling them now.

Since that point, six months ago, I have eaten a much higher fat and lower protein diet than I used to. Protein shakes and bars are gone and instead I'm eating chicken thighs with the skin on and more avocados and olives (not all together).

WHAT ARE EXOGENOUS KETONES

The ketone body Beta Hydroxy Butyrate (BHB) has now been developed and patented under licence from Dr Dom D'Agostino's University of South Florida and, over the last two years, ketone salts have become commercially available in supplement form.

Some ketone salts guarantee to get you into ketosis in under one hour so your body can benefit from the ketones without having to restrict your carbs. I've used these very successfully with a number of BJJ athletes who have come to me panicking in the last 10 days of a weight cut when they haven't got their sums correct.

More serious athletes, who don't have the time or patience to stick to a full ketogenic diet, are using supplemental ketones alongside carbohydrates to help maintain an optimal weight between contests, rather than the constant roller coaster of adding and cutting weight. This will be an area we hear more of over the next 12 months.

Even if you decide not to try keto, I'd suggest that eating a lot less carbs and more healthy fats as a lifestyle choice will give you at least some of the benefits I've talked about.

HOW TO USE KETOGENIC DIET IN PRACTICAL TERMS FOR BJJ:

Ease yourself into it
Use extra salt
Drink plenty
Talk to others who are doing keto
Give it time
Experiment with carbs around hard sessions
Try exogenous ketones

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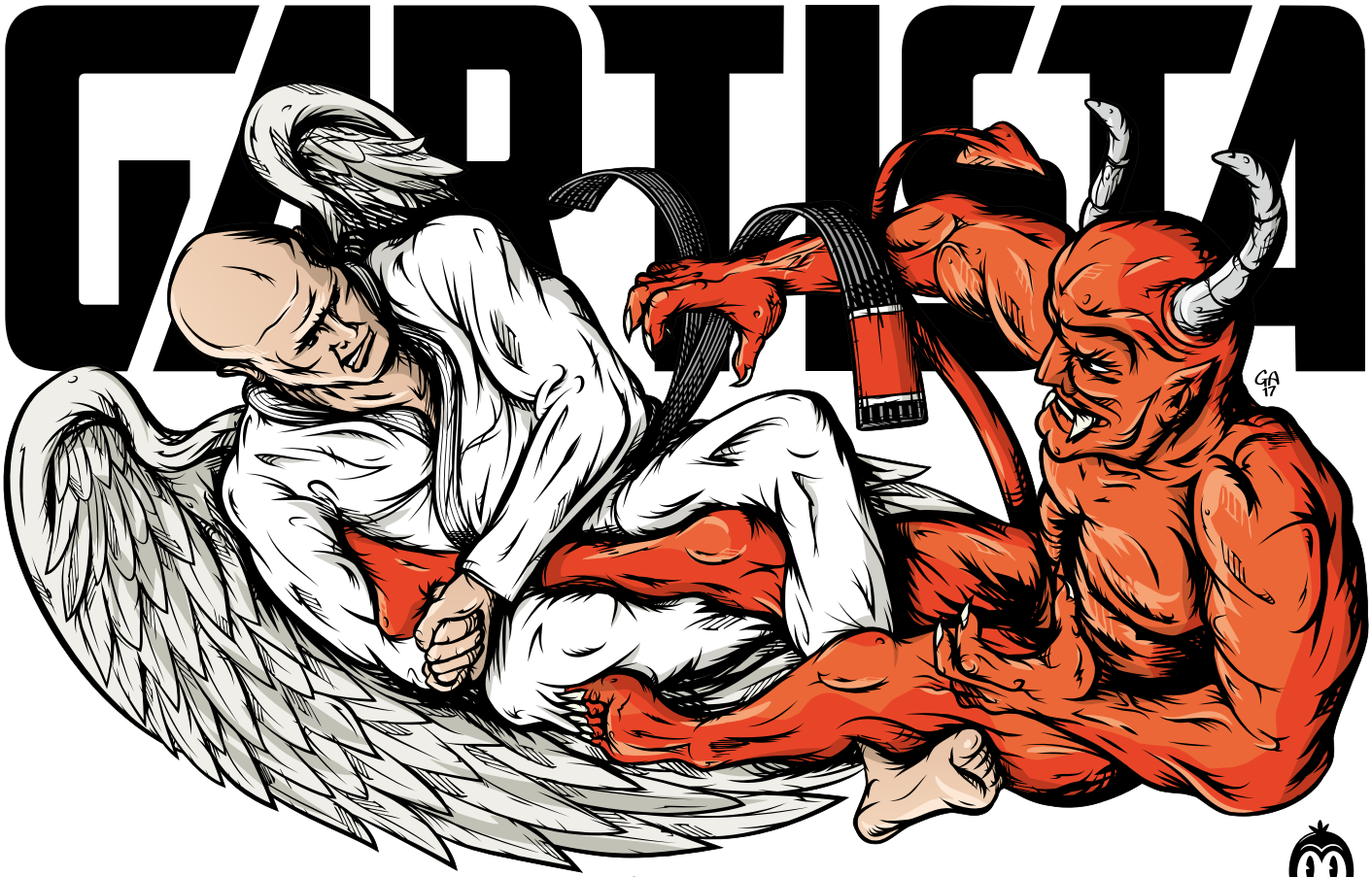

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PICTURES: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

ABU DHABI WORLD PRO 2017

The UAE Jiu Jitsu Federation (UAEJJF) continues to push the boundaries of our sport, elevating the status of professionalism within the world of jiu jitsu.

The 2017 rendition of the Abu Dhabi World Professional Jiu Jitsu Championships was another tremendous success; once again showing a glimpse of what the future could hold for the gentle art.

The competitor list read like a 'who's who' of our sport, with the only notable omissions being Marcus 'Buchecha' Almeida and Mackenzie Dern (the latter an omission at the eleventh hour). As always, the level of jiu jitsu on display was exemplary; every belt level was well represented and contributed to this celebration of jiu jitsu.

The 2017 event included one notable change: only two athletes from the same country could compete in the same weight category at brown and black belt. Consequently, the athlete with the highest UAEJJF ranking qualified automatically, while other entrants of the same nationality had to compete for the final World Pro slot via a mini-qualifying tournament. Two athletes of the same nationality would also be drawn on the same side of the bracket for the main tournament, ensuring that no final would be carried out between athletes representing the same country.

This huge change in the structure of the World Pro is, in our eyes, a big step in the right direction when addressing the main goals of the UAEJJF: to increase levels of participation and do everything that can be done to make jiu jitsu a viable sport for Olympic consideration.

It may sound like a broken record, but the UAEJJF continue to amaze us with their innovations and dedication to developing the sport of jiu jitsu. The most exciting thing? They're only just getting started, and show no signs of slowing down until they reach their long-term goals.

MALE -56KG

Rodnei Junior went for the kill against Japan's Todokoro Masaaki in the final match. He was able to reach the back and finish with a lapel choke to take the belt home.

MALE -62KG

Mikey Musumeci had won the division on Friday after winning all of his matches in an 'all against all' bracket. Cleber Fernandes finished second and Hiago George finished third.

MALE -69KG

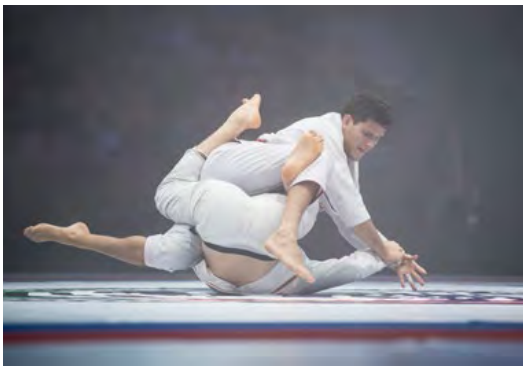
Gianni Grippo gained his second World Pro title in a row with a powerful performance against Tiago Bravo in the final. The American was able to take Bravo's back to seal an 8-0 lead. In the third-place match, Isaac Doederlein choked Talison Costa from the back for the bronze.

MALE -77KG

In what can be called a friendly match, teammates Edwin Najmi and Gabriel Arges pleased the crowd with a decent roll. Arges went ahead on the scoreboard with a sweep and maintained the lead up until the end to celebrate another title in Abu Dhabi.

MALE -85KG

Claudio Calasans Jr. was not intimidated by the home crowd, who were cheering for local favourite, Faisal Al Kitbe. In a well-fought match, the Brazilian imposed his game to build a 6-0 lead and take the belt. In the third-place match, Marcos Costa outscored William Dias 1-0 on advantages to make it onto the podium.



MALE -94KG

Felipe Pena allowed the very dangerous Adam Wardzinski no room for manoeuvre. The Brazilian worked his way to Adam's back and finished the final with a choke, to claim yet another belt to add to his World Pro collection.

MALE -110KG

José Junior, already the UAEJJF ranking leader for the 2016/2017 season, stepped on the mat to claim another belt. He did so via a 2-0 win over a very game Chris Bowe. In the bronze medal match, Erberth Santos beat Manuel Pontes by one penalty.

FEMALE -49KG

Mayssa Bastos picked-up the belt by winning all of her bracket matches on the Friday. Rikako Yuasa finished second and Liwia Gluchowska finished third.

FEMALE -55KG

Talita Alencar really wanted to finish her very successful season with a bang, and she did so via a toehold victory over Vanessa English in what was a very entertaining match. In the bronze medal bout, Thamires Aquino beat Amal Amjahid 2-1 on advantages.

FEMALE -62KG

Bia Mesquita was on fire in this final, as she went after Tammi Musumeci full throttle and ended on the American's back to finish with a choke. In the bronze medal match, Jess Fraser beat Laurence Cousin 2-0 on advantages.

FEMALE -70KG

Ana Carol Vieira found herself up against a very tough opponent in Amanda Benavides. The gold medal and the belt came Carol's way by a 4-1 lead on advantages. In the bronze medal match, Priscila Cerqueira choked Fiorella Coto from the back.

FEMALE -90KG

Nathiely de Jesus ended a brilliant campaign with another powerful performance against fellow Brazilian, Talita Nogueira, who was very brave not to tap to an early armlock. The 4-2 lead on points was more than enough for Nathi to take the belt home and secure first place in the UAEJJF ranking.

JIU JITSU LEGENDS' MATCHES

HEAVYWEIGHT

Marcio "Pe de Pano" Cruz played on bottom and managed a sweep within the final 30 seconds of the match to outscore Gabriel Napao 2-0 and retain his title.

MIDDLEWEIGHT

Amaury Bitetti managed two advantages against one scored by Roberto Traven to become the first ever middleweight champion.

WELTERWEIGHT

Vitor Shaolin showed he's still on top of his game after making short work of Kenny Florian. Shaolin sunk in a clock choke while Florian was attempting to progress with a single-leg sweep: the American ending up going to sleep, handing Vitor the belt.

LIGHTWEIGHT

Alexandre Soca paced himself until the right moment to sweep Baret Yoshida and score the two points that secured his win, keeping his belt for a further year.

BANTAMWEIGHT

Wellington 'Megaton' Dias had waited more than 20 years for this rematch, and with it a chance to avenge his 1996 defeat to Helio Soneca. Unfortunately for 'Mega', Soneca was once again able to find his way to victory via a sweep and a 2-0 lead.

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WORDS: MATT BENYON

WE CAN ALL DO BETTER

Is there any room left for The Humble Warrior in today's (d)evolving society?

Having written last month about how great Garry Tonon is, and including in my praise his ability to hype fights, it would seem at odds to discuss the virtue of being humble in today's world, both within jiu jitsu and at large.

Let me preface this by saying that I am myself a work in progress, and I have my own flaws - lots of them, many of them - in fact most of them; I have most of the flaws that it's possible to have. Having said that, I am always doing my best to resist the temptation to broadcast myself too much on such readily consumed media as Instagram or Facebook. It seems that many of the heroes in our sport do not have that filter.

If you take any classical book on philosophy or character-building, almost all of them will recommend practising humility and limiting arrogance. Across all civilisations across all of history, humility has been considered a virtue, and arrogance, a vice. It seems that, in recent history, that has been turned on its head. In much the same way as individual privacy, once a coveted aspect of daily life, was thrown by the wayside when blogging and then Facebook took hold, it has now been readily accepted that you should essentially boast about how amazing you / your life / your jiu jitsu is, at all times, across all of social media.

Who cares? And who am I to pontificate on this? Well, I care, and at least until Callum fires me for moaning too much, I have this space to communicate with you. There's a growing trend in the world, a bizarre post-modern nihilist relativism where nothing really matters, there is no objective right and wrong (because that may offend people), things only matter if they are relevant to me right now, it's every man for himself and I am just here to get as much from the world as I can before I shuffle off it.

It's prevalent in our opinions on science ("My ignorance is as valid as your knowledge / anti vaccination / flat earth"), in politics ("Hi, I am a controversial business man with no political experience and also the leader of the free world") and in jiu jitsu ("Guys do you know how humble I am? I am the most humble person in the world, let me tell you about how humble I am! #humility").

Marcelo Garcia, who by all accounts is a very humble kind of a chap, had to recently invite a couple of his students to take an extended leave of absence due to their behaviour. In a video posted online, Marcelo became emotional as he talked about the virtues he expects of his black belts and of the people around him. The video was called "We all can do better." This, from a man many consider the G.O.A.T., perfectly embodies the spirit that is sometimes lacking from so much of our small community.

> "IF YOU TAKE ANY CLASSICAL BOOK ON PHILOSOPHY OR CHARACTER-BUILDING, ALMOST ALL OF THEM WILL RECOMMEND PRACTISING HUMILITY AND LIMITING ARROGANCE"

Marcelo spoke of the importance of realising the influence you have on those around you. The importance of simply being nice. What a powerful message. If you subscribe to the philosophy that those who achieve much should be able to boast of their achievements, then Marcelo has more right than anyone to be arrogant and boastful, yet there is not a shred of that on display.

I've recently had to stop following a number of our sport's top names on social media. I just could not handle the barrage of selfies, of self-love, of self, self, self. One, who shall remain nameless, constantly referred to himself in the third person and had endless Instagram stories of him stroking his own face while looking lovingly into the camera and driving his expensive car. It was staggering. There are female leaders of our sport who often post very insightful and thought-provoking philosophical quotations - accompanied by close up pictures of a butt. Listen, I'm all for philosophy, and nobody is a bigger fan of pictures of butts than me. But I like to keep the two separate.

I've definitely been guilty of the odd selfie in the past, and it's not something I'm proud of, but the rampant narcissism is just too much. Why do I care? Why does it bother me so? Because our actions affect the community we live, work, and train in. We have the ability to steer it the way we want. Do we want to steer it towards a philosophy of instant gratification, arrogance, and false humility? Or to a place of genuine humility, and "niceness" (to use Marcelo's catchall term as a way of defining being a person of good character and moral standing.)

Perhaps I am turning into some kind of grumpy old curmudgeon (definitely) who hates social media (yep) and is harbouring a secret, intense jealousy towards the admittedly enviable lifestyle of many of our sport's leaders (entirely possible) but even so, it is not difficult to argue that humility is a positive trait and arrogance a negative trait. I have kids, and I want them to grow up with examples of how to be good human beings. I want them to know that if you're doing well in life, then you do not need to gloat over the fact.

Just like jiu jitsu, sometimes you're up and sometimes you're down. It's essential not to attach too much emotion to either state. I want my kids to know that what they see online is not real life; it's a rose-tinted lens that people use to present themselves to the world, and that people all have the same struggles in life. By not holding our narcissism in check, we're making life for the next generation much, much harder.

The topic is far bigger than this article can cover, and I am definitely not saying I am against people talking about themselves or posting photographs of themselves. That's not the case at all. The key is in how things are presented, in not mixing messages, and as in all things, not to overdo it.

As Marcelo said, simply, we all can do better.

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